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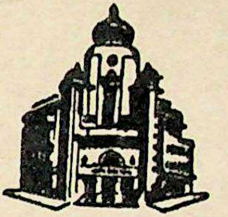

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

WORLD IS GOD

Swami Ramdas

GENERAL EDITORS

K. M. MUNSHI

R. R. DIWAKAR

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY

What Bharatiya Vidya Stands for

Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharat and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

2. Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4 Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.

5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, iddas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7 The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

- (a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and
- (b) the adoption by the student of the *Shishya* attitude by the development of—
  - (i) respect for the teacher,
  - (ii) a spirit of inquiry,
  - (iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form or attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world

आ नो भद्रा: क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वत:।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, 1-89-i

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General Editors
K. M. MUNSHI
R. R. DIWAKAR

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WORLD IS GOD

By

SWAMI RAMDAS

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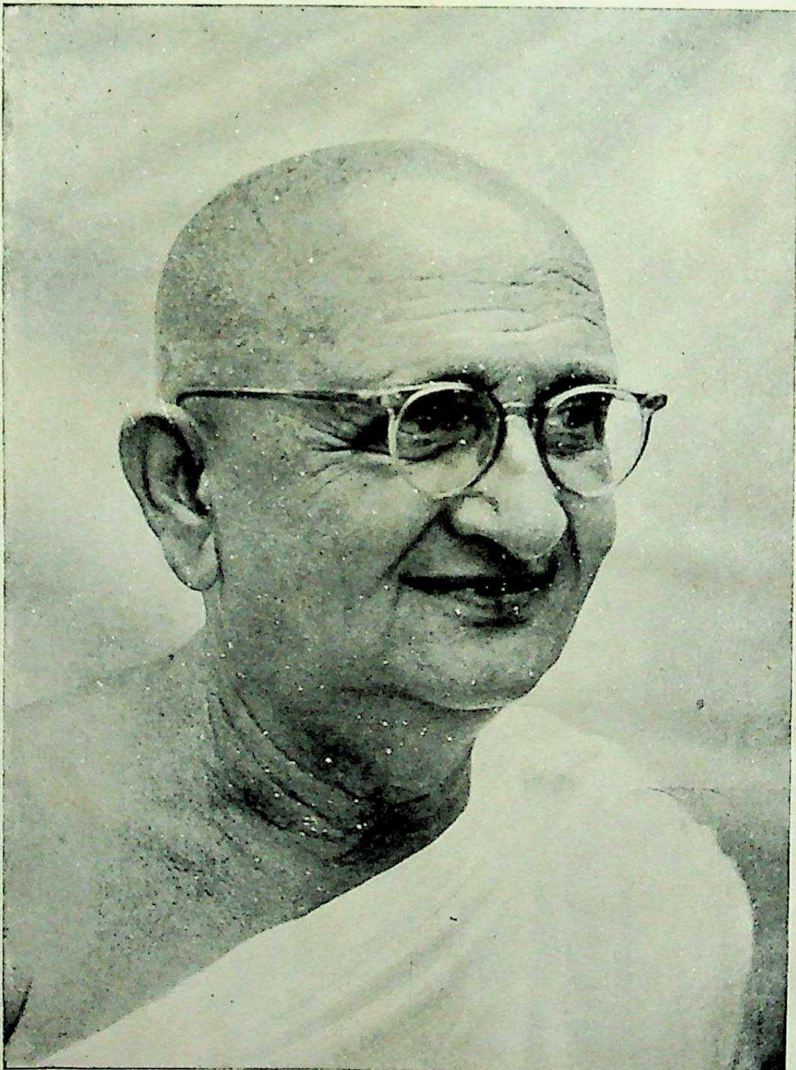

SWAMI RAMDAS

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

WORLD IS GOD

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 1.75*.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

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*Since raised to Rs. 2.50

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata,* summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the Gita by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata:* "What is not in it, is nowhere". After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the Gita, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, Queen Victoria Road,
New Delhi: K. M. MUNSHI
3rd October, 1951.

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K. M. MUNSHI

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WORLD IS GOD

The theme of Ramdas' first book "In Quest of God" was the dawn of his new life and its unfoldment during the first year of the great change that came over him. After some time, in continuation, he wrote the book "In the Vision of God." In the second book Ramdas has described practically all he had experienced in the spiritual path before he reached the culminating point in his realization of the Eternal.

The present book is the outcome of the world tour on which he went about a year ago and from which he returned after five months. It chronicles Ramdas' impressions formed during this tour and the observations he made in the various places visited. In the course of his itinerary he met a variety of people in whom he saw none other than his beloved Ram. Ramdas' love flowed out to them all alike. His vision, ever pure and glorious, saw the one Spirit pervading everywhere, assuming all forms of life. In this tour he saw the world, looking at it as one unit, as a revelation of God, as the global expression of the Divine.

All differences and distinctions which, through the eye of ignorance, one beholds in this variegated world-show, disappear in this exalted and comprehensive vision of the Divine. Verily, from the fullness of his experience, Ramdas can boldly declare that World is God. This does not mean that the other worlds—the innumerable planets, stars and other heavenly bodies forming the cosmos—are not God. The entire universe is God. The all-inclusive and transcendent vision and the spiritual realization from which it springs have already been described and stressed upon in his earlier books.

It must be understood that Ramdas' spiritual perfection was achieved before he started on the tour. So this book has nothing new to present about his spiritual progress, evolution or the ultimate attainment as a result of this tour.

In this tour Ramdas beheld at close quarters the world as the embodiment of the Divine. It was not merely a mental contact he had, but a deep spiritual experience of oneness with the Divine Power that pervaded this world body—the Virat. The physical proximity, leading to the spiritual communion and fusion with all beings on the globe, was the foremost significant feature of this tour.

In the light of all that Ramdas felt and saw, which are recorded in these pages, the book can rightly bear the name 'World is God'. In it two aspects of existence are described and stressed, one the Spirit which is infinite and eternal, and the other the world as the body of that Spirit, containing all beings and creatures within it. The title of this book stands for the essentially-to-be-reached milestone in the march of humanity towards the goal of world-union, goodwill and harmony.

The purpose on which Ramdas was sent by God to travel round the world was to spread the message of Universal Love and Service. This great ideal can be practised by looking upon all mankind as the revelation of God. In this view earth is the centre of our thought. Earth is the theatre on which we play the game of life. It is the scene where we live and struggle to attain the supreme beatitude of life. It is the Karma Bhumi, the place where our physical body is shaped and born, on which it lives and acts, and into which it ultimately returns and dissolves. It is the Dharma Kshetra, the field in which we prepare ourselves for our ultimate destiny of liberation and realization. It is on the earth that we put into practice the loftiest principles by which we recognise our relationship with all beings. It is here that we train and fit ourselves, through self-control and discipline, for the final plunge into the infinite ocean of spiritual light, power and joy. Humanity is the heart of this world in which we live and move. Identity with humanity is identity with the universe, and vice versa.

Ramdas' travel in different countries of the world is also significant in another respect, that is, so far as his mission relating to mankind is concerned. The tour signifies the fulfilment of his life mission. He went out of India clothed with the authority from his Divine Master, to point out to the world the right way to world unity and peace. This unity and peace can be attained only when we realize that all human beings are children of the same Divine Father and Mother, that all humanity is the expression of one universal Self, that all lives and things are the forms of one infinite Consciousness—nay, that the entire world is the manifestation of God.

As man begins to discover the universal Spirit, of which he is a form, he begins automatically to see the Divine in all his fellow-beings and creatures. Ultimately the whole world appears before his transformed vision as the veritable embodiment of the Spirit. He sees on the face of every man the light of God. Truly, he sees things not as they appear to be, but as they really are. The goal of mankind is the realization of this spiritual unity on the basis of which alone peace can prevail.

If all human beings unite as one man by resolving their unnatural differences and take their stand upon the basic reality, God, then by the power and grace which they unitedly release, they can effect a revolutionary change and thereby bring about a universal wave of peace-consciousness.

The world in which we live, and the countless other worlds, in the midst of which ours is placed, have a common link, as all of them are pervaded by the one eternal and limitless Truth or God. The microcosm is the Macrocosm. The individual is the universal. God dwells in every being and thing, however small, in His entirety and perfection.

It is rightly said, when we realize God within us and know that our body is His body, then the whole world or the universe is also known as His body. Conversely, when the whole universe is realized as God, we know we are also He.

God has made Ramdas into a ripe fruit on His huge tree of manifest life for presentation to the world as a gift. Under His guidance, care and grace, Ramdas' life grew, budded, bloomed and fruitioned until at last it became ripe, sweet and fragrant. Surely all the glory for the production of such a fruit is His—Ramdas' beloved Master's.

Ramdas' life has no future, as it has transcended time and space. It has nothing new to achieve or attain. It is one with Cosmic Reality. Birth and death have nothing to do with it. Eternal stillness and eternal movement are its centre and circumference—the centre fixed in eternity and circumference encompassing infinity; boundless existence reduced to a point and a point expanded beyond all conceivable limitations.

God took Ramdas into the world to see God in all beings and teach them thereby that they are forms of God, to grant them the vision to see the world as God.

Ramdas' voice is the voice of God. The cosmic sound is caught and made audible through God's vibrant vehicle—Ramdas. The cosmic light is caught, focussed and made to shine in and through the transparent tabernacle—Ramdas. The cosmic joy is caught, condensed and revealed through the innocent child—Ramdas.

Thus Ramdas' life is resounding with the music of Eternity. Its sweet strain is never-ending. It is a divine symphony of sublime serenity, calmness and peace that is ineffable, harmonised with spontaneous activity embodying the Spirit of Universal Love and Service. Waves and waves of Bliss rise from it to dance on the bosom of Satchidanaṇd and lose themselves within itself. Its creation is destruction, its beginning its own end. A resonant Silence! That is Ramdas!

CHAPTER I

GOD LEADS

The great thing has happened. For nearly five years the nebulous idea of Ramdas' world tour was in the air. Now and again there were talks and predictions about it. Two or three years ago Ramdas had a talk concerning it till late in the night with a friend, accompanied by lot of fun and laughter. It appeared the idea was slowly materialising. In the year 1954, God in a mysterious way decided upon sending Ramdas abroad.

To go on a world tour was not an easy matter. It was considered by everyone who heard of it to be a tremendous venture involving many problems. But, for God, nothing is difficult. When He wills, all things take place without any hitch or obstacle. As prompted by Him, in June 1954, Rani Lalita Devi of Hyderabad offered to finance the tour and resolved to go with Ramdas.

Preliminary arrangements were soon set on foot. Rani Lalita Devi got ready all kinds of warm clothing for use in the cold countries. In a month's time everything necessary was done and we—Mother Krishnabai, Ramdas and Swami Satchidananda–started from the Ashram. Of course, there was a good deal of commotion produced in the minds of not only the Ashram inmates, but also friends who heard of it in all other parts of India.

Blessings of Saints

When the decision to go on tour was made, Ramdas sent letters of appeal to several saints of India for their blessings. The blessings came. They heartily responded to the appeal, appreciated the idea and wished that the tour should be crowned with success and that we should return with sound health. Really, the blessings of saints are the most powerful help. Ramdas is a servant and child of saints. He always looks to them for guidance, inspiration and grace. God says, "When you honour saints I am pleased." Verily, God and saints are one.

We started from the Ashram on the 3rd August 1954, and reached Mangalore the same day. We were welcomed by Sri M. Shama Rao and his wife, a most devoted couple, at their home. They were overflowing in their devotion and hospitality to us. We spent about three hours blissfully with them. Here we had the darshan of Sri Rama Devi and Swami Siddhakumar who came to see us. Many devotees came to wish us godspeed. The atmosphere in the house was filled with spiritual fervour.

We were to leave by plane for Bombay the same afternoon. But owing to cloudy weather and impending storm and rain, the plane that was to take us to Bombay did not land at the Mangalore airport. We returned from the airport to the town and stopped at the house of another devotee, Sri Kanda Narasimha Chettiar, a disciple of Sri Anand Swarup Maharaj of Dayalbagh. He invited us to stay with him until we departed by the next day's plane. This devotee and his wife too bathed us in their pure love and devotion.

God Himself is His Devotee

Next day, we caught the plane which took us to Bombay. At that airport a large number of devotees were present to receive us. We stayed, as usual, with Sri Natverlal G. Parikh at "Ivorine." As on previous occasions, "Ivorine" became holy by the visits of hundreds of devotees throughout the day and part of the night.

Truly, God Himself is His devotee. When Ramdas found so many devotees coming to him, forgetting their worldly work and commitments to remain with him, almost losing consciousness of time and space, he could feel how great was the love which they bore for him.

Considering his health and age, many expressed concern about his fitness for the great world tour which he had undertaken. This they did out of their pure kindness and affection for him. Some others satisfied themselves with saying that since Ramdas' venture was prompted by God, he would get through the tour without any trouble. Mothers presented him with warm apparel and evinced also great anxiety about his welfare. We were joined here by Rani Lalita Devi and also by Sri Sagarlal Gupta who was to form one of the party.

Unlike on previous occasions, this time there were no Bhajan programmes at "Ivorine" except the one by Sri Dilip Kumar Roy who entertained and thrilled the assembled devotees one evening with his sweet devotional songs. Dilip Kumar Roy is a prominent disciple of Sri Aurobindo. He is a gifted singer. He is a pure, noble and illumined personality. Whenever there was an occasion for Ramdas to meet him, there used to be, on both sides, a feeling of supreme joy and ecstasy. Now he had come to see Ramdas from Poona with his daughter-disciple Indira Devi. Our friend Sri Gurdial Mallik also came to offer his felicitations.

Object of the World Tour

On the evening of the Sunday, previous to the date of our departure from Bombay, there was a large gathering of devotees at "Ivorine." Many among them spoke expressing their good wishes for our tour, praying at the same time for our safe return. Ramdas was deeply affected by their great love and care for us. When devotees wish well of you it is sure that you have come under divine grace itself. At the request of the devotees, Ramdas delivered his parting message to them. Therein he revealed the object of his world tour in the following words:

> Now, the object of his going to foreign countries, as willed by the Divine—Ramdas uses the word 'foreign' as it is the common usage, but, in fact, there is nothing 'foreign' to

him as the whole world is his home—is to propagate the ideal of Universal Love and Service. Ramdas can propagate this ideal only in one way and that is by beholding his Beloved in all beings so that his love may flow out and inundate the entire world, removing all man-made distinctions, and enable all people to stand united as one world-family, because it is one God that pervades everywhere and all humanity is the expression of Him. Ramdas is going there to show all how it is possible to achieve this exalted experience. Everyone must realise that the Divine is within him.

God was seen at every step to remove the obstacles in the way. He eased all the difficult situations we had to face before departing from Bombay. Even those who doubt God's intervention in the affairs of men come to believe in His solicitude when they actually see how He helps those who trust Him. It is unnecessary to go here into the details of the manner in which God interceded in this case. Wonderful indeed are His ways! That is all Ramdas need say here.

After fourteen days' stay in Bombay the time came for our flight from there to Rome. Although the plane was to leave at about midnight, a large number of friends came to the airport to give us a hearty send-off. The scene at the airport before the departure was a memorable one as it was most touching. Ramdas can well imagine how the hearts of all the assembled friends must have been deeply agitated over their separation from us and their anxiety for our safe return from the tour round the world. When your heart is transmuted by the alchemy of devotion into a pure expression of love, you are not a human being then, but an embodiment of God. For, God is love. We could feel, when the plane took off, making its huge buzzing sound, with what painful hearts all the friends at the airport were gazing at the plane that was to carry us thousands of miles to a continent far, far away. The plane rose and after a few minutes it was up in the air taking the five of us within its secure cabin.

CHAPTER II

ITALY

Rome—The Holy City

The night passed. In the morning we landed in Cairo. The place round about where we landed was a vast desert. The heat was great. We took some rest in the airport and then again emplaned and flew to Rome, the Holy City. We landed there and, as we came out of the airport, met Mrs. Jean Herbert a slim, fair, young lady, her eyes filled with the light of devotion, waiting with humility to receive us. We got into the bus that was to take us to the city. On the way Ramdas asked Mrs. Herbert, "Your husband must be waiting for us in Geneva anxiously. Isn't it so?"

Mrs. Herbert: "He is terribly so."

Ramdas: "Perhaps you were more eager. That is why he has sent you here in advance. He has seen us before, but you haven't.

Mrs. Herbert: "You are right. I was very, very anxious to see you. Further my husband thought I might be of use to you here."

"Your Name Shall Be Prasanna"

We reached the city and lodged in a hotel. When we had fairly settled down, Mrs. Herbert came to our room and sitting by the side of Ramdas asked him, "Papa, will you initiate me?"

Ramdas: "Yes, take this Mantra—Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram."

Ramdas made her repeat the Mantra three times.

Mrs. Herbert: "I am filled with peace and joy."

Then she talked about various things and expressed her concern to see that Ramdas' stay was made most comfortable in her house at Geneva. After making herself acquainted with all the arrangements that she had to make at her home, she said, "Papa, you must feel quite at home in our place and ask for anything that you might need."

Ramdas: "Ramdas already feels in his imagination quite at home there. Ramdas wants you to give him some time, apart from all other programmes, so that he might crack jokes with you all."

Mrs. Herbert: "Oh, that's fine! You must never stop cracking jokes."

Ramdas: "Sure you'll start liking Ramdas."

Mrs. Herbert: "How do you know I have not already done that?"

Ramdas: "You will like him more."

Mrs. Herbert: "That, of course, is right. I want you to give me a name."

Ramdas: "Your name shall be 'Prasanna'."

Transitoriness of Earthly Power

In the evening we went round the city studded with ruins and monuments symbolising the glory and power of ancient Rome. Rome was a city ruled by great emperors like Julius Cæsar and Marcus Aurelius. Ruins of the old imperial structures like the stadium, museums, arches, columns, prisons and palaces revealed the ancient history of this world-renowned place. The vast Roman empire, as it is said, had risen to the height of a great civilization. But as everything of earthly pomp and circumstance is laid to the dust by time or fate so this great empire too had fallen leaving behind as landmarks a few monuments that speak to the instability and transitory nature of all mundane achievements.

St. Peter's Church

Next morning we went out with the object of paying a visit to St. Peter's Church and the Vatican, if possible. The sight of St. Peter's Church produced a wonderful effect on us. The inside of the church has its own spiritual atmosphere and whoever enters it feels elevated and inspired. As we stepped into the church we beheld radiant figures, in white marble, of Lord Jesus and Virgin Mary, and a painting of St. Peter holding in his hands the keys of heaven. There were also on the walls huge statues of departed Popes, who held spiritual sway for long years over the Roman Catholic world, and of noted Christian saints, besides many artistic signs and emblems. The architecture of the entire edifice was simply marvellous. All these inspiring sights lent sanctity to the place, leaving on the visitor an impression that cannot be easily effaced. Every nook and corner of this great church is permeated with divine light and peace. Verily, you feel Christ's presence in this holy place of worship in which the followers of Christ meet. Ramdas for one, was enraptured with all that he saw and felt there. It was not the external beauty and excellence that so much attracted Ramdas and kept him under their spell as the holy figures that seemed to be alive, as if about to descend from their pedestals, surrounded by a spiritual aura that worked like magic on him. He walked and walked along the winding aisles and under the arches gradually traversing the vast interior of the church and gazing at the wonders before his eyes until he returned to the main doorway again.

Ramdas saw here the much venerated statue of St. Peter in black marble. The followers of this saint are used to lay their heads at the feet of this statue and touch them with their hands. By such constant rubbing the feet got worn out in course of time, and have had to be replaced by newly made ones many times during the last 400 years. He saw also many chapels where mass was held by the presiding priests, and devoted Christians on bended knees bowed and prayed before the shrine of Christ. Such scenes show how the human heart everywhere longs for the solace of communion with God; how the agitated and distressed soul finds peace when in all humility it offers itself at the altar of the Divine Maker, Altogether the hour spent inside this church, built in the name of Jesus Christ's foremost disciple St. Peter will remain fresh in Ramdas' memory.

In the evening we wandered over many places in Rome and came upon two significant sights. One was the statue of Marcus Aurelius on horseback and the other the prison in which St. John was incarcerated.

Marcus Aurelius

Marcus Aurelius was the great philosopher-king of Rome. His life may be compared to that of King Janaka who reigned in Mithila—an ancient kingdom in India. His book of meditations shows to what sublime heights of spirituality he had reached. Ramdas had the joy of reading this inspiring book several years ago, from which he gives here an apt quotation as evidence of the Emperor's eminence:

> All parts of the universe are interwoven and tied together with a sacred bond. And no one thing is foreign or unrelated to another. This general connection gives unity and ornament to the world. For, the world, take it altogether, is but one. There is but one sort of matter to make it of; one God that pervades it; and one law to guide it, the common reason of all rational beings; and one truth; if, indeed, beings of the same kind, and endued with the same reason, have one and the same perfection.

Why Saints Suffer

At the barred gate of a huge building, which was a prison, we were told by our guide, Prasanna, how St. John was pursued from place to place, subjected to the most cruel atrocities, and at last captured in Rome and put into this prison, inside which also he had to undergo horrible tortures. Martyrs are those who have suffered torments for the sake of Truth or God. Strange are the ways of the Divine! His most beloved devotees, to whom He reveals Himself in all His glory in their hearts, are made to pass through great tribulations and ordeals both before and after they are accepted by Him. Before they realize Him these sufferings are for their self-purification, and after their realization the supreme sacrifice and sufferings they undergo are for the uplift and redemption of mankind.

Letter to the Pope

Ramdas wanted, even before he landed in Rome, to avail himself of the opportunity to pay his respects to His Holiness the Pope. On reaching Rome we came to know that he was too ill to afford us an audience. So the idea was dropped. However, before leaving Rome, Ramdas wrote a letter to the Pope praying for his blessings for the success of our mission. Here is the letter:

Rome, 19th August, 1954.

Your Holiness,

We—Mother Krishnabai, Ramdas, Swami Satchidananda, Rani Lalita Devi and Sagarlal Gupta—have come here from India and we so much wished to have an audience with you during our stay here. Our stay being brief—we are leaving for Geneva by tomorrow's plane—we regret very much we will not be able to see and pay our respects to you as we hear you are not keeping good health.

Our humble mission during our world tour—we have planned to visit many countries in Europe, America and the Far East—is to carry to the hearts of all people the message of the Spirit, to talk to them about the glory of God. We earnestly pray that you may shower on us your blessings for the success of our mission.

We greet you with all our heart in the name of Lord Jesus and the Holy Mother Virgin Mary.

We pray God that you may soon be restored to sound health.

A copy of our itinerary is enclosed herewith so that you may follow us with your prayerful thoughts.

Ever your Self,
Ramdas

To His Holiness The Pope Pius XII.

Difficulty of Language

During our stay in Rome we had to face the difficulty of language. None of our party knew the Italian language. Mrs. Herbert was extremely helpful as she played very well the part of an interpreter for us. On one occasion, when she was not with us, we rang for the hotel attendant as we wanted some milk. When the attendant came, our friend Sagarlal tried to make him understand our need. But the language in which Sagarlal spoke could not help. He made signs, but signs also failed to convey to the attendant what we wanted. Sagarlal was undaunted, and being resourceful and witty, he raised both his hands half way and, closing his fists, moved them up and down alternatively to show to the attendant that he wanted milk which is got by milking the cow in the manner he gestured. Even this most suggestive attempt failed. The attendant was, with eager and wide open eyes, witnessing the graphic performance of Sagarlal. Unable to comprehend what this acting really signified, he bent down slightly and with his upraised hands made signs by moving them outwards in three repeated gestures to make us know that he did not at all grasp what Sagarlal was striving to tell him, and disappeared. The picture of the face, the bent figure, the action of the hands and the sudden vanishing trick of the attendant set us roaring with laughter.

When we were walking on the footpaths witnessing the sights of Rome, we noticed groups of Italians standing on the opposite side of the road and curiously gazing at us. Our complexion and dress were evidently the cause of the attraction. Mother and Rani Lalita Devi wore Indian sarees. Ramdas was dressed in a long coat reaching up to the ankles, Satchidananda in an orange coloured dhoti, shirt and upper cloth, and Sagarlal in his usual European dress, none of us having any headwear. The party should have looked strange to the western eyes.

CHAPTER III

SWITZERLAND

Geneva

After two days' stay in Rome we flew to Geneva. At the Geneva airport our friend Mr. Jean Herbert was eagerly awaiting our arrival. He evinced unfeigned joy on seeing us. He took us by car in drizzling rain to his sweet abode, about three miles from the city, situated in charming natural environments. It was a quiet spot, away from the din and bustle of the city. The surrounding scenery of green gardens, parks, hills and landscapes was most enchanting. In such a fascinating setting stood the nice wooden cottage in which Jean Herbert and his wife lived. We were led into the house and made quite comfortable.

Our fortnight's stay at this beautiful place was most memorable. The days passed as minutes because of the love and devotion which the blessed couple poured on us and the kindness shown by the visitors who daily thronged the library in the house. Groups after groups of earnest spiritual aspirants used to pour in to listen to Ramdas' talks and answers to their questions. The visitors belonged to various schools of spiritual thought and discipline. There were Sufis, social workers, disciples of Indian Yogis, pious Christians and other ardent seekers of Truth. All of them sat together in the library with complete harmony of thought and feeling. For the time, all distinctions based upon social and religious scruples dissolved in an atmophere of perfect unity and peace.

God was the one theme of all the talks—God who is the omnipresent Spirit, of whom all are the embodiments. From Ramdas' heart flowed out spontaneously unending streams of his God-given love on the listeners. It was only with reluctance that they would get up and go out when the time came to close the meetings. There were daily three meetings. In the evenings, at the end of the meetings, we used invariably to have silent meditation for about half an hour. We sat still, squatting on the floor, in a dim light, our minds attuned to the Divine—the all-pervading infinite Consciousness. The calmness and serenity that prevailed at the time was wonderful. Everybody was bathed in a sea of peace, light and joy.

People from far and near came for interviews with Ramdas as they were all keenly intent on knowing from him the truth about the realization of God. After meetings were over, some members of the group would particularly like to contact Ramdas individually in his sitting room. There they displayed their great faith in and love for him. They made offerings of fruits, sweets and flowers, as also books treating on religion. They often handed to him letters written in simple, sweet and loving words. Ramdas found them all to be true seekers filled with pure emotions and fired with an ardent aspiration for God.

Ramdas had gone to various parts of India and met thousands of people who cherished great love and regard for him. Here in Switzerland, a place far away from India, in the continent of Europe, Ramdas found in the people he met the same feeling of love and friendliness for him. At the meetings, on one or two occasions, Ramdas made the congregation sing the Ram-mantra. All the members joined the chorus heartily and enjoyed the bliss resulting therefrom.

A Vision of Christ

During the talks, one evening, a few young men came in with a Roman Catholic priest. They took their seats along with others in the hall. When the talks were over at 8 p.m., these young men wanted to meet Ramdas privately in his room. But the priest who came with them was in a hurry to go away, being not very much inclined to talk with Ramdas. However, persuaded by the young men, he also came in. Ramdas greeted him with all love and offered him a chair. Others sat on the floor.

Jean Herbert, who sat near Ramdas, then said: "The Father says he has nothing special to ask you, but young men wish that you should tell them about the vision you had of Jesus Christ."

Ramdas then gave a graphic description of the vision he had of Jesus in the Himalayas. He said:

From his school days Ramdas had received inspiration from Christ because he was taught Bible in the school. From that time he has entertained a very high admiration for Jesus. His teachings cast a spell, as it were, on him. He had high veneration also for other incarnations such as Krishna, Rama, Buddha and great saints. When the new life came to Ramdas he felt that he was mysteriously influenced by Christ, Krishna and Buddha. He used to read their teachings and derive invaluable help from them. God in his inscrutable way granted him the visions of Krishna, Buddha and Christ. These three great Teachers held out before him that absolute purity in thought, word and deed was essential for knowing and realizing God. They guided and inspired him, when Ramdas took refuge in them.

Now Ramdas shall describe briefly the vision he had of Christ in a cave on the Himalayas. He was on fast for five days, taking only water of the Ganges river flowing nearby, keeping vigil day and night thinking of God. In this cave no light was kept at night. One midnight, he suddenly found the cave flooded with a strange light. Ramdas was sitting with his eyes closed. The powerful light struck his eyes and he opened them. He beheld before him sitting, a radiant figure. Intuitionally he felt it was Jesus. He was dressed in a long robe of chocolate colour, his locks of hair were falling loose on his shoulders and his face showed the utmost sweetness and serenity, glowing with a divine radiance. What arrested Ramdas' attention was his eyes that sparkled like stars. Seeing these eyes Ramdas was transfixed and went into ecstasies. He cannot describe the joy he felt at that time. The figure before him spoke a few words, but he could not make out the language. This vision lasted, maybe, for a few seconds. The result was that, till the following morning, Ramdas was lost in a sea of rapture. When

Ramdas is describing this vision he sees it mentally even now, because it was so vivid and real.

The Father was deeply moved when he listened to this account. He now appeared to be very happy for having come and heard Ramdas. He also asked him a few questions.

Unity of all Religions

For Ramdas all religions are equally great. His love for all the divine teachers or spiritual masters is alike. For instance, when a true Christian comes to Ramdas, he encourages him to be devoted faithfully to Christ so that through Christ he can attain salvation. Verily, all the great Saviours of the world are seeking to guide humanity to the same goal—God, who is the Lord of all nations and peoples of the world. Ramdas' visit to the western countries was not intended to stress differences among the followers of various religions, but to emphasize by his talks, behaviour and movements the underlying unity in them all. So the followers of all religions found in Ramdas a kindred spirit, as though he belonged to their group or denomination. At the same time they were getting more and more assured of the fact that all ways of approach to God, as pointed out by the different teachers of the world, were equally true and efficacious.

Moral Rearmament Association

In the course of our stay in Geneva we paid visits to a few important places. The reader might have heard of the organization widely known as the Moral Rearmament Association. Its main object is to bring together peoples of all countries in the world so that any differences arising from colour, creed, language and other distinctive peculiarities that keep one nation isolated from the other may disappear, creating thereby a consciousness of world-brotherhood. The principles on which this association is founded are high, noble and inspiring. It has also a spiritual outlook on which should be built the character and conduct of all its members. They are called upon to pursue four ideals, namely, absolute honesty, absolute unselfishness, absolute love and absolute purity.

Prayer, meditation and communion with God form the basis of all their activities. The headquarters of this association are on a hill at Caux, about sixty miles from Geneva.

At the instance of a friend who was keen on our going to this great centre, one day, accompanied by Prasanna, we paid a visit to it. We started early morning and reached Caux a little before midday. We were welcomed by some Indian and European friends. The founder and chief controller of this association, Dr. Frank Buchman, whom we expected to meet, was not there. It appeared he had left the place on urgent business some time before we arrived there. However, the friends took us directly to the big hall, which was already crowded for a programme about to start. That was the day of the Africans. Large deputations of Africans from Nigeria, Gold Coast and Morocco were seated on the platform. We took our seats in the front row and witnessed a most delectable scene. We found on the platform Africans of various tribes and also some white men in their midst. There were songs and speeches by the African deputies. They narrated one after another, for the information of the audience, their spiritual and other experiences after they joined the association. The speeches disclosed that there was a harmonious feeling among all the members though they were drawn from different countries. Altogether the performance was most impressive and elevating.

At Caux that day we found thousands of people assembled. There were Indians, Africans, Americans, Europeans, Japanese, Australians, etc. It was like a kaleidoscopic show when all these members took their seats for lunch at hundreds of tables. After we finished our lunch we were taken round and shown the methods of cleaning, washing and cooking adopted in the respective rooms allotted for these activities. All work was done here by volunteers of both sexes as fraternal service. It is a good sight to see people of different parts of the world together at one place moving with one another in a brotherly spirit. In a world full of strife such associations certainly contribute towards the creation of a harmonious feeling in the hearts of humanity and thereby eradicate ill-will and hate which breed conflict and war. Before evening we got back to the ever hospitable house of Jean Herbert.

To Lyon

Next day we went to Lyon in France at the invitation of a friend, M. Francisque Soubrier, who came with his wife to see us at Geneva. The love which this couple bore for us was unique. They were extremely anxious that we should spend a few hours at their house in Lyon. We travelled there by. train. In the train we noticed that the passengers were polite and eager to serve and help us. Although we were outwardly strangers, we mysteriously felt as if we had known each other for a long time and belonged to one fraternity. The journey was a pleasant experience.

Large Hearts in a Small House

We reached Lyon and were taken to the house of our devoted friend. As we entered the quarters, the ladies and other inmates were all agog, preparing to make our stay comfortable. The place was small, but the hearts of the hosts were large. We were accorded a hearty welcome and treated as honoured and loved guests. A small room was placed at our disposal for the visitors to see us. After lunch, which was served with great love and kindness, we all assembled in the room which in a short time became overcrowded. Questions were put to Ramdas and he went on answering them. The visitors listened with rapt attention. Of course, his talk was about divine love, peace, light and grace.

Love Wins

Among the visitors was a young man who spoke about his contact with a God-realized person living in North France. As the talk developed between this young man and Ramdas, the former got excited. He made some remarks which were taken by the assembled friends to be arrogant, and they tried to stop him. But Ramdas allowed him to proceed. A part of the dialogue between him and Ramdas is given below:

Q: Have you heard of a person, known as George, living somewhere in France? He says he is Christ reborn, that he had lived here 4,000 years ago and that those who see him realize God. What is your opinion?

Ramdas: So far as Ramdas is concerned, he sees the Divine in every one of you. He does not know that he should see God only in one and not in another. Those who awaken God in the hearts of people are really great souls. We must respect and revere them. Ramdas sees divinity everywhere and with this vision he has come from India. With this vision he lives and moves and also shares his joy with you. If it is possible for Ramdas to meet that great soul, he will surely do so. For Ramdas, you are all the forms of his eternal Beloved. Ramdas has come here to tell you how to see God in yourself and everywhere about you, so that you can see unity in diversity, because you are not merely a perishable form, but you are the immortal, omnipresent Spirit. If you realize this, you will enjoy everlasting peace and bliss.

Q: The realization is, after all, individual. What are the things that you recommend for seeing the Divine?

Ramdas: Ramdas' means of approach was the constant chanting of God's name by which you tune yourself with the Divine within you and realize that you are the Divine.

Q: Jesus has realized God and says he is a servant of God. Do you believe in that?

Ramdas: Yes. Ramdas believes in it. Jesus said: "I and my Father are one." Still he called himself the son of the Father.

Q: So do you mean to say there is no fundamental difference in nature?

Ramdas: If a human being is illumined, there is no difference between him and Jesus.

Q: Why is it then that only Jesus achieved that stage?

Ramdas: There are so many others also who have achieved that stage.

Q: Why has nobody illumined the world as Jesus did?

Ramdas: Buddha came before Jesus, so also Krishna, who too illumined the world.

Q: If Jesus were among us, would you recognize him?

Ramdas: Certainly, yes.

Q: Is realization of God forbidden to those who are married?

Ramdas: Absolute celibacy is essential for realization.

Q: Gandhiji started leading a life of celibacy when he was thirty-six years old.

Ramdas: He became a celibate from an early period of his life. Brahmacharya means to walk on the path of Brahman. You should be always God-conscious. In this consciousness there is no idea of sex; for, in it there is no duality. Then, where is the question of sex? If you want to raise yourself to that high spiritual plane of absolute freedom from sex consciousness, you must not see persons in terms of woman or man. You must see in them only absolute Truth, the Atman which is nameless and formless. You can do so only when you rise above the body idea.

At the close of the meeting, after about two hours, Ramdas got up and shook hands with the visitors near him. Among these the young man above mentioned was the first. As Ramdas did so, this friend was carried away by such an emotion that he brought his face near Ramdas' and kissed him affectionately on both his cheeks. The parting scene here moved the hearts of many.

The Path of Purity

During the course of Ramdas' researches in the science of the soul, to corroborate his deep spiritual experiences with what was said in the writings of saints and sages who had reached the highest spiritual attainment, Ramdas came across some works and also met some persons who were of the opinion that for the spiritual realization the complete elimination of the sex desire was far from necessary and positively harmful. Some of them went to the length of contending that at a particular stage in the spiritual discipline sex connection between a God-illumined master and a pure aspirant or disciple of the other sex was essential for the transformation of the disciple from the human to the Divine. By such an act the master was supposed to impart to the disciple a spiritual power which went to destroy the ignorance in the latter and grant the disciple all-round spiritual light and liberation.

This kind of teaching, as a doctrine, is prevalent in certain classes or cults of an ostensibly religious nature. It is also evident, this cult has spread its influence in almost all parts of the world. Now Ramdas has to say a few words on this subject for the edification of seekers of Truth or spiritual aspirants who are puzzled about the prevalence of this practice among certain groups.

Ramdas can definitely and categorically declare that the path which these misguided people pursue for their fancied spiritual knowledge and illumination is utterly wrong. It leads to nothing but frustration, despair and downfall. This teaching is poisonous at the very root. Ramdas advises all those who uphold this practice and assert that it should play an important part in the life of the aspirant, that it would be well for them to reject it totally, disabusing themselves of the belief in its spiritual value or efficacy, and take to a life of perfect purity in thought, word and deed. God-realization is possible only when our hearts are absolutely pure. The heart must be free from lust, greed and wrath. All the great scriptures of the world be they of the Hindus, Christains, Muslims, Buddhists, Jains or Zoroastrians comprising the teachings of the great spiritual luminaries or masters of the world, declare with one voice that the highest beatitude, peace, liberation and bliss—by whatever name the experience is described—through the realization of Truth, can be achieved only by a person who has conquered all the baser impulses and desires of the flesh. To indulge in sex and other enjoyments and still arrogate to oneself a status of spiritual eminence is a contradiction which marks the height of perversity.

Jesus has laid great emphasis on purity as an essential trait of a soul which is fit to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. He said, unless we become as pure and innocent as children we cannot attain immortality and peace. The Hindu scriptures like the Bhagavad Gita are ringing in our ears the need for the complete extinction of the ego and all its desires before we can realise our oneness with the Divine.

Purity of Gopis' Love

The lives of the disciples of Christ, of the followers of Mahavira and Buddha, as well as the devotees of Krishna are radiant examples of purity, for the guidance of spiritual seekers. We have heard of the love of the Gopis for Sri Krishna. It was the purest and the most exalted in its character and content. It was born of a complete dedication of every part of the Gopis' being to the supreme Lord whom they beheld within and without, everywhere. This love they attained by transcending all the physical planes of life and consciousness and living only in the spiritual, which is the same as living in Krishna—the supreme all-pervading Consciousness. Where there is lust and greed, there can never be any divine peace, light or freedom. So it would be well for spiritual aspirants to shed all their doubts and pre-conceived notions–the offspring of indiscriminate reading of all kinds of books–and follow the straight path to reach God, the path of purity, rectitude, truthfulness, simplicity and innocence.

At the Lyon railway station, where we had to wait for some time to catch the train, we came in contact with a friend who had been wishing to meet us for a long time and was present at the meeting in Lyon. He told us that he was in charge of a prison and was looking after the unfortunate inmates with all kindness, sympathy and consideration. He talked feelingly about them. We noticed one thing among the people in Europe and other western countries. Whenever they undertook any work of charity or service, they would do it with all sincerity, putting forth their entire energy. Ramdas noticed, further, when he passed through the streets, that the people generally were healthy, strong, active and industrious. Climatic conditions may be largely responsible for such a state of things. Neatness, order, system and discipline were also present in a high degree among them.

CHAPTER IV

SWITZERLAND *(Contd.)*

Difference between Jesus and other Saints

One day, Jean Herbert proposed that we should go to a monastery at Broc, in Switzerland, to meet Father Dom Barras, a prominent abbot. This idea was suggested to him by Father Conus who had met and talked with Ramdas earlier at Jean Herbert's place. The Father was quite open-minded and appreciated what Ramdas said in regard to the universal nature of spiritual experiences. The following account of a portion of the talks indicate the nature of the questions on which the conversations took place:

Father: "Is absolute purity possible on the physical plane?".

Ramdas: "Yes. It is possible when the mind is completely absorbed in God through constant remembrance and meditation, which takes one away from all lower desires to the static, changeless and formless aspect of God. By complete withdrawal of oneself from the plane of the body, mind and senses and their contact with the external world, one gets into a trance-like state which is called Nirvikalpa Samadhi. After one has experienced this Samadhi, one's desires are all destroyed. He now sees the whole universe as the manifestation of Truth that he has realized during Nirvikalpa Samadhi."

Father: "People say the whole of nature is the manifestation of God, but they also admit that they have not experienced the static aspect of Truth. Is this possible?"

Ramdas: "No. Unless one experiences the static aspect first, one cannot see the world as the manifestation of Truth."

Father: "Then they must be talking things only in a state of emotion."

Ramdas: "Yes."

Jean Herbert: "Father Conus is very happy that your experiences tally entirely with those of St. John of the Cross who was a great mystic. This is the great compliment he can give you."

Father: "Jesus has been accepted as God. What difference is there between Jesus and other saints?"

Ramdas: "It is like the water in a well and that in a river in floods. The water in a well is made use of by only a few people of a locality, whereas the river water in floods reaches a vaster area and caters to large number of people. Saints are like well water and incarnations such as Jesus are like a river in floods."

Father: "So the difference is only in quantity?"

Ramdas: "Yes. It is quantitative and not qualitative."

Visit to a Monastery

In pursuance of the suggestion above referred to, we started along with Jean Herbert and Father Conus one fine morning to the monastery, which was about 150 miles from Geneva. While passing through the countryside we cursorily witnessed the life of the agricultural classes who were busy in their work in vineyards, fields and meadows. Their simple, rustic life of hard labour amidst the abundance of nature's gifts was a most pleasing and elevating sight. The open bright spaces along the hilly slopes covered with extensive vineyards, the plants arranged in regular rows forming picturesque designs on both sides added to our zest in the excursion as our cars sped along the smooth metalled road to the destination. At last, after driving through many villages which had their churches, farms and cottages built in a fashion not familiar to Indians, we reached the gates of the abbey.

From outside we saw the monastery consisted of a number of houses where the novices lived alone undergoing rigorous discipline. The rules of the institution, as we learnt later, were very strict. The abbot, a stoutly built person with a spiritual lustre on his face welus with love and hospitality. He took us into a room at the entrance where we had our lunch. Then the abbot, along with his assistants and Father Conus, had a conversation with Ramdas on 'Grace'. They listened to Ramdas with rapt attention and expressed their satisfaction that what Ramdas spoke tallied exactly with the writings of Roman Catholic saints. Ramdas felt supremely happy in their company. He may here give briefly some points touched upon in the course of the talk:

Abbot: "I would like to know from your experience if it is possible to be free from all passions and if so how."

Ramdas: "It is perfectly possible to be free from passions. How it is possible, Ramdas shall explain. When, by the grace of God, you remember Him constantly, without break, your mind becomes absolutely pure and free from all passions. The mind is then like that of a child, guileless and innocent. It will never be contaminated by contact with external objects when the light of God enters into all parts of your being, both mental and physical. This is the absolute purity which you attain through the grace of God. What discipline you undergo is done by God's will alone, and not by your will or initiative."

Abbot: "This agrees totally with what we believe. I would like to ask another question. If a man makes serious efforts to purify himself, will he take a long time to attain the purification?"

Ramdas: "Not only that. If he struggles to discipline himself to attain purification by his own will, without inviting divine grace to help him, his struggle will be in vain, however long it may be. In the ultimate state when God's grace fully illumines him, he lives always in the presence of God and no unholy thought can ever enter his mind. Ramdas can say that, when God's grace has completely transformed him, he remains naturally pure, without any discipline. God-thought having been stamped in his mind, thereafter he will never be enveloped by darkness and be subject to the desires born of it."

Abbot: "Does that mean that after a man has reached a certain stage, he is liable to fall again? In the Christian doctrine it is said there is always a danger of one foregetting grace and glorifying the ego."

Ramdas: "Ramdas anticipated this question. When you have surrendered yourself to God, and, by His grace, you have become entirely His, you feel secure under His protection, and He assures you that He will never allow you to fall. God, in all His mercy, will protect you at every turn of your life. If there are temptations, He will see that you do not fall into them. His protective power is so great that there is no likelihood of a fall if you have handed yourself over to Him, made Him your all in all, your sole refuge. God protects you as a mother protects the child."

Abbot: "Are there any cases where saints have fallen and risen again? We have known Christian saints who had fallen."

Ramdas: "Saints are God-realized persons, and so they can have no fall. But those who have reached only a certain stage and not attained full realization of the Divine and who have not completely surrendered to His will are likely to fall. This does not mean that God withdraws His grace from such a person, but the latter withdraws himself from the grace. Grace is ever pouring on all of us. But we must be fully conscious of it. Sometimes we are so conscious and receive the grace, but, at other times, certain conditions prevent us from accepting the grace and as a result we fall".

The abbot then took us into the interior of the monatsery and showed us round. According to their rules no ladies could be admitted inside. So only Jean Herbert, Sagarlal, Satchidananda and Ramdas went in. Mother Krishnabai and Rani Lalita Devi remained in the room where we had lunch. The abbot showed us the chapels and rooms where the novices had their spiritual practices. At one chapel we knelt down to worship at the shrine of Lord Jesus on the Cross. The few moments we spent in silent prayer were most precious in that they filled us all with the pure light and peace of God. The visit to the monastery confirmed Ramdas in his view that though their paths may vary, the seekers in all religions are, after all, aspiring to reach the same goal of supreme peace and liberation. Before we left the monastery we all met outside near our cars. The flushed and radiant face of the abbot reflected the deep peace of his heart. And Ramdas too was in a state of unusual ecstasy. The leave-taking was touching. We then motored back to Jean Herbert's beautiful villa in Geneva.

"Matru Devo Bhava"

One day a Russian engineer friend, M. Mironoff, took us to his factory in the city where various kinds of machines are made. He was a sincere spiritual seeker and attended the meetings in Jean Herbert's library. He led us first to his office room where he and his colleagues were busily engaged in fitting up a newly invented machine. Then we went round to the big factory where hundreds of machines were automatically working for the production of various parts of machinery. It was not the factory that impressed Ramdas so much as the love and devotion of the friend who showed us round. He has remained a bachelor although he is in his forties. His sole ambition in life is to serve his old mother about whom he talked to us with deep feeling. He counts her service as nothing short of worship of God. One day he had the joy of bringing his mother to Jean Herbert's place to see Ramdas who had a few words with her. She is a simple, devout and trustful soul.

Ramdas cannot close this chapter without making mention of a sculptor friend, M. Henri Presset, who also attended the daily meetings at Jean Herbert's place. He has developed a new technique of sculpture which is greatly admired these days in several parts of Europe and America. He took us to his studio to show us his work. He was a simple and good-natured young bachelor who also was serving his old mother with great care and tenderness. It is real joy to meet people faithfully serving their old parents who brought them up with all love and care. In the Upanishads we read:

मातृदेवो भव। पितृदेवो भव।
आचार्यदेवो भव। अतिथिदेवो भव॥

> "Let your mother be God to you. Let your father be God to you. Let your spiritual preceptor be God to you. Let your guest be God to you."

Thus we see that the first honour and adoration of our heart must go to the mother, then to the father, then to the Guru who liberates us from the bondage of ignorance and grants us the knowledge of the eternal, and lastly to the uninvited guests. In fact, before we can be fit to receive the grace of the Guru, we have to purify ourselves by the loving service rendered to our parents.

Another day, Srimati Savitaben, the daughter of our friend Sri Nanji Kalidas Mehta of Porbandar, took us in her car to her flat in Geneva where we were treated to light refreshments. She was all kindness and love to Ramdas and party.

Work goes with Prayer

Ramdas has also to mention here about the visit of a simple, guileless and hard working couple from a distant place. They had heard of us and were eager to meet us. They came in an evening, sat with us and participated in the vegetarian fare in our company. They wanted to know whether a life of honest labour was not compatible with devotion to God. Ramdas assured them that true life consisted in combining prayer and work. When our heart is with God and our hands are at work, we are really God's chosen ones. Now, He showers His grace on us and grants us inner light, peace and joy. Verily, God is the deity of our heart which is His dwelling place.

Among those who came to stay with us for some days, there were two or three who were extremely devout and were silently helping in the kitchen and other places. One of them Mlle. Tony Fleury, was a gem of a spiritual seeker. Her face was calm and serene and she was moving about fully inebriated with the bliss of divine communion. Then there was Mlle. Denise Navarre, a girl who came from Belgium. She was also an ardent devotee, always present at the meetings, imbibing what she could from the talks that we had on spiritual subjects. A couple, Mr. and Mrs. Coulon, also from Belgium, used to attend the gatherings. Another couple from the same country, Mr. and Mrs. Haesaerts, who came to see us, invited us to Brussels, before they departed. Miss Diana Mathot from France, who has been long known to us, as she had come to our Ashram some years ago, also paid us a visit. Before she left she expressed a keen desire that we should stay at her house during our visit to Paris, and we agreed.

"What A Fine Message!"

One evening when Ramdas was, as usual, sitting in the library, a lady entered accompanied by Jean Herbert who introduced her to Ramdas as the Queen of Italy. She was tall, stately and dignified in her appearance. She was offered a seat near Ramdas. Although, as we were told, she had passed through many severe ordeals, her face showed calmness, resignation and serenity. She held a tiny book in her hand. She said, "I am having this book always with me. This is the book of your sayings translated into French. My aunt had it and I took it from her. It is so inspiring."

She suggested that we should have a few minutes' silent meditation and we had it. When it was over, she asked, "What is your message for me?"

Ramdas replied, "God is within your heart and you are His embodiment."

Queen: "What a fine message!"

Ramdas: "We are all the embodiments of Divinity.

Our true nature is pure bliss and peace. To be conscious of this means to be always happy and peaceful."

Queen: "I am so happy to have met you."

She took leave of Ramdas and saw also Mataji before she left.

The Miracle Happened

Among the visitors there was a lady, who used to come with her children, and with great concentration listen to Ramdas' talks. Whenever Ramdas saw her sitting in the gathering he found that her face was suffused with a strange light and ecstasy. At other times, she was all smiles which revealed the joy she inwardly experienced. After the first meeting, she came to Ramdas in his private room and confided to him her sorrows. While she was an ardent devotee of God, her husband was not. He was expressing his emphatic protest against his wife's visit to saints or spiritually advanced souls for her spiritual elevation. She prayed that Ramdas should bless her husband and turn his mind towards God. As she said this, her eyes were filled with tears and her body shook with uncontrollable emotion.

One day, she was able to persuade her husband to come with her for the meeting. That evening, after her husband left, she came to Ramdas and confessed that her husband was far from being impressed by Ramdas' talks. Ramdas found her utterly miserable. But she was brave and full of faith. She made another attempt and brought her husband to the next day's meeting also. He put to Ramdas this time a few questions. From his attitude Ramdas could make out that he was not satisfied with Ramdas' answers. At the close of the meeting, however, the miracle happened. Before he left with his wife, he was a changed man. He came with his wife to our private room and said that his struggle had ceased and he had found peace, as a result of the unseen power coming from Ramdas that influenced him and brought about a total transformation in his life. Thereafter, he became one of us. The joy of his wife knew no bounds. All glory to God and His Name!

Sufi Devotees

Ramdas must say here a few words about the Sufi friends who used to regularly attend the meetings. They were the disciples of a great Sufi saint, Monsieur F. Schuon. All of them were votaries of the Divine Name. Whenever Ramdas spoke extolling God's name, they used to listen to him with manifest delight. After the meetings they would invariably see Ramdas in his sitting room and express their gratitude for the peace they enjoyed when they were in his company. Their faces were bright and cheerful. They were kindly and meek in their behaviour. Truly, the Divine Name and self-surrender are the two main factors that contribute towards the fullness of spiritual experience of one who is utterly devoted to God. Such are the true lovers of God, and they are really blessed beyond measure.

"Simply Enviable!"

During our stay with them Jean Herbert and his sprightly wife were all love and hospitality to us. Their home looked like an Indian home in every respect. Prasanna often used to tell Ramdas that our fourteen days with them were far too short. On hearing Ramdas' talks Jean Herbert used to be supremely happy. After the day's programme was over, he would come to Ramdas in his private room and give him a warm embrace whenever he was highly elated. One day, as usual, he came to Ramdas after the talks and said, "Swamiji, your talks this afternoon were simply fine! The Sufi friends who came to hear you were greatly moved when you said that you have come here not to convert others to your faith, but only to push everybody forward on his or her own spiritual path of whatever faith, creed or sect they be, and that you are here not to establish a new cult."

Ramdas jokingly asked him, "What do you think of Ramdas' state?"

He replied, "Your state? Simply enviable!"

One day, Jean Herbert and his wife took us to their worship room upstairs where they prayed and meditated.

We stood there for a while before an artistic table on which we saw images of God Ganesha and other deities. The room had a serene atmosphere. Besides being an ardent devotee of God, Jean Herbert is a man of aesthetic tastes. Both he and Prasanna are of the same temperament—deeply spiritual, free and cheerful. Jean Herbert is a scholar and linguist. He knows several European languages. Ramdas understands he is also well versed in Sanskrit. He has translated into French many Sanskrit works. He has also done researches in the field of different religions and cultures—especially of India. He has brought out some original books on them. His greatest asset is a genial and kindly nature.

Frequently, we would go out in the evenings for walks along the smooth and clean roads on both sides of which were tall oak and other trees that gave a cool shade to the pedestrians. Drinking in the fresh, and bracing air, we would quietly walk in these sequestered parts. Often we were joined by other friends who came to the meetings. The serenity, greenness and charm of the sylvan scenes we witnessed raised our spirits, and we moved about like care-free children. Verily, we are all children of the one universal Divine Mother!

Few or none among the visitors who came to see Ramdas knew English. So while he talked in English, Jean Herbert or Prasanna, who were both expert interpreters, used to translate the talks into French. Thus the language difficulty which confronted Ramdas was easily overcome.

Portions of Ramdas' talks with friends at the meetings in Jean Herbert's library during our fourteen days' stay in Geneva are given below:

Ramdas (To some visitors who entered the room): Sit down, please. You might find it difficult to sit on the floor in that posture. We have come here from a long distance to talk to you about God. Do you all understand English?

A Visitor: My friend does not know English. I have read your book "In Quest of God". I understand English. This lady wants to know if she could ask a question.

Ramdas: Yes.

Q: How to achieve all that you have mentioned in that book?

Work of Grace

Ramdas: The simple answer to this question, so far as Ramdas is concerned, is that it all happened by God's grace. God's grace came to him and transformed him and that alone produced the miracle. Our effort is useless. His grace must come to us. Then things happen as they should happen for our uplift and ultimate illumination and realization. It is not achieved by our merit. We can turn our mind towards God only if and when He wills.

Q: Is there any great difference between receiving the name of God from a Guru and taking it from a book by ourselves?

Ramdas: There is a great difference, indeed. When you get the Name from your Guru, the effect of it on the mind is marvellous. Guru infuses into the Name, when he gives it, his own spiritual power. In other words, he transmits his power through the Mantra to the disciple.

Two Ways

Q: Which is the quickest way to attain the goal?

Ramdas: There are two ways. One is to expand your ego to infinity, and the other is to reduce it to nothing, the former by knowledge, and the latter by devotion. The Jnani says, "I am God—the Universal Truth." The devotee says, "I am nothing, O God, You are everything." In both cases the ego-sense disappears. The safer and surer way is to take refuge in God and be ever under His grace and protection.

Q: As you say, when the whole world is the Lila of God, should we ignore the Lila, or should we take part in it? Should we resist and try to abstain, or should we be tools of that Lila?

Ramdas: We have to play, each one, a part allotted to us by Him who is the Master of the play. He is within us and He is responsible for this Lila. If we are aware of Him, within us, we play our part well. If we foget Him, we play our part ill. While in the former case we reap happiness, in the latter we reap misery or unhappiness.

Q: If it is God that acts in me, whatever I do must be all right, even the crucifixion of Christ.

Ramdas: If you are conscious that God is acting through you, you will never do any wrong. You do wrong only when you forget God. Hence, when the light of God within you guides you, you will always be walking on the path of truth and goodness and be incapable of doing anything unrighteous.

Q: Do you consider that thoughts such as love of beauty are necessary for spiritual progress?

Ramdas: Love of beauty does not mean merely love of the beauty of external appearance. It is love of goodness and virtue in a person's nature. Is it not so? We love Buddha, Krishna and Christ because of their glorious and beautiful qualities. They were at once beautiful in person and spirit, at heart and in all their actions. Because of this, we adore them and as a result we rise beyond our lower nature and attain perfect purity, enlightenment and bliss.

How to Love God

Q: Please tell us how to love God.

Ramdas: Truly speaking, it is not that we have to love God, but it is to know that God who is Love is seated in our hearts. By surrendering ourselves to this great love in us, we become embodiments of that love. By constant remembrance and meditation, as we realize His presence within us, our life becomes pure and illumined with His light and love. Then, love radiates through us and we see with love, talk with love, give with love, receive with love, walk and act in all manner of ways with nothing but love. We become the very image of love.

Q: Do you say Guru is God?

Ramdas: The meaning of the word "Guru" is "dispeller of darknes" or "giver of light." Guru is the embodiment of God, on earth to liberate souls from darkness and bring them light. Guru is an awakener and a saviour.

Q: How can a European best try to fulfil the conditions necessary for the Japa-yoga in the midst of the confused life and activity in Europe?

Ramdas: If we depend upon God, everything is possible. The conditions prevailing in Europe are more or less the same as those prevailing in other parts of the world so far as spiritual life is concerned. It is not any external conditions that deter us from trying to realize God but our own mind.

Worship God in Your Heart

Q: Swami, I never believed in God or religion before. But now I do believe. As I belonged to no church or religion, I cannot go to any church now.

Ramdas: It is not necessary that one should go to church if one is not in a position to do so. God is seated in your heart. Worship Him there. When you find Him within your heart and everywhere, you will realize that the whole universe is His manifestation, and whatever you do is His worship and His service.

Q: God has to meet the wishes of all?

Ramdas: The changing mind of man cannot be permanently satisfied with any material thing. What he likes at one time he does not like at another. What he wants now he does not want the next time. The only way for a man to be always happy is to submit to God's will and, leaving everything to Him, be contented in the condition He places him. By changing circumstances, we cannot get real happiness.

Q: That means our internal attitude is to be changed.

Ramdas: That is precisely what is necessary. Externally all things happen as He wills. Submission to Him is the only course. Surrender means inner contentment and peace.

Q: Should we pray to God?

Ramdas: Yes, we have to pray, all of us. Prayer is the only way by which we can keep contact with God, opening a channel between ourselves and Him. Prayer is the means to make His power, light, glory and purity flow into us.

The Most Important Thing

Q: What is the most important thing on the God-ward path?

Ramdas: Ramdas shall tell you about the path that leads the soul to God. The first thing necessary is grace. It is grace that makes us long for God. Longing for God develops into constant remembrance of Him and the constant remembrance of Him gives us the vision of Him and the experience of Him. This experience brings us whole-hearted love for Him and this love enables us to behold Him—our Beloved—everywhere, inside and out. This is the final stage wherein the soul reaches the goal and finds complete peace, bliss and freedom.

Q: Is there any difference between Buddha-consciousness and Christ-consciousness?

Ramdas: Ramdas for one does not see any difference between the two except in the names. One is called Buddha-consciousness and the other is called Christ-consciousness. Buddha and Christ are great personages who came to teach mankind how to reach that Consciousness which is the same in the experience of both.

Q: Can dogmas be considered as opposites of true spirituality? I mean rituals, ceremonies and doctrines.

Ramdas: If they are helpful in our attaining spirituality, let them be observed. If they are not, let them be given up. Everything enjoined upon by the scriptures may be done provided they lead us towards God, make our life pure, so that

God's light may reflect in us, be revealed in us. Let our struggle not be a show. We must be tremendously earnest at heart.

Q: Can we say that soul had a beginning and it was created by God or did it ever exist?

Ramdas: Soul is God; that means it is ever existent and never born.

Saints and Avatars

Q: What is the difference between those who realize God and God who descends in the world as incarnation?

Ramdas: Men struggle on the path of God-realization starting from their ignorant stage and become saints on attaining God, whereas God who takes a human form as an Avatar is not caught up at all in ignorance and has therefore no struggle to attain knowledge.

Q: When we love some people, should it be with the desire that they should change, or should it be without any desire at all?

Ramdas: We must give love for love's sake.

Q: There was a Catholic saint who rebuked God whenever he was led to do something bad, and put the whole blame on Him.

Ramdas: That shows how great is his love for God and dependence on Him. In the first place, he realizes that there is a God who can protect us. With this assurance he next rebukes Him, "O God, why did You not make me act in the right way, why did You allow me to walk on the wrong path?"

Spirituality and Healing

Q: How can we help somebody to be physically healed through spiritual means?

Ramdas: That should not be the aim of spirituality. The aim of spirituality is to elevate ourselves into the divine Consciousness. Thereafter God uses us as His instrument to heal physical sufferings of others, if He wills so. But to cultivate spiritual powers with the sole object of healing physical diseases of friends or neighbours, does not seem to be the right way. Let us heal ourselves within, heal our mind and make it divine. This is the first thing to be achieved so that our love for our neighbour be really pure and selfless. Otherwise we will be trying to heal the diseases of others with some motive which is not desirable.

Q: How can we know that we have received grace?

Ramdas: As soon as grace comes to us, we become conscious of it. Our heart becomes perfectly pure and we shall bear no ill-will towards anybody. We shall be overflowing with love towards all beings on the earth. We shall experience within us a rare joy which we never experienced before.

Q: Will all mankind reach the super-conscious state one day through evolution?

Ramdas: That is our prayer to God.

Q: Does not that happen inevitably by re-incarnation?

Ramdas: By the mere fact that a man is reborn, it does not mean that he is evolving. But we are all on the road that leads to ultimate liberation. Everybody has to reach one day or another that supreme state of liberation. One may reach it earlier, another later, but everybody will ultimately attain that goal. It is inevitable.

The day of our departure from Geneva came. Although the parting from friends was a great wrench, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert did not feel it so much because they were to meet us again in France after our visit to Germany. We boarded the plane which took us in a short time to Frankfurt in Germany.

CHAPTER V

GERMANY

Frankfurt

At the airport we were received by our friend Mr. U. G. Exner who had visited our Ashram and stayed with us for some months shortly before the second world war broke out. He was anxiously awaiting us. On seeing us he was thrilled. He spoke excitedly about his inability to take us to his place as he was under orders to go to Italy and Egypt. He was moved to tears when he was explaining the situation. We lodged in a hotel where Exner, acting as an interpreter, greatly helped us. We had no prearranged programme in Frankfurt.

One day we went with Exner to a distant garden surrounding a lake. It was a very charming spot. The flowers were of varied colours, extremely pleasing to the eye. We sat down for some time on a bench witnessing the fountain playing before us. Nature's beauty is God's own beauty. God's varied manifestations impress upon us the truth that God is in all things and He chooses to reveal Himself in wonderful forms.

Exner left us on our way back to the hotel from the garden. God did not take time to make us get into contact with a new German friend, Dr. Gunter Zuhlsdorf who knew English. He came to see Ramdas at the hotel. He is a typical German who is devoted to God. He has high admiration for Sri Ramana Maharishi. By an inward contact with the sage he has derived immense spiritual light and solace. He said that he was the leader of a group called the Vedanta Circle and also edited a monthly spiritual magazine, *Geistiges Leben* in German. At the first contact itself he took a great liking for Ramdas. He proposed, at short notice, to arrange for a small meeting of devotees at his residence to hear Ramdas. He observed that he would have convened a larger gathering if our stay had been longer. Ramdas agreed to spend an hour at the meeting which was fixed for the evening of the next day. God manipulates things in His own way. He is inscrutable, and we have only to submit to Him and say "Thy will be done!"

Dr. Gunter came to the hotel to see Ramdas again the following day. There was with Ramdas then a German lady who had come from a long distance to see him. She did not know English and Dr. Gunter acted as the interpreter. She came to find peace in Ramdas' company. Ramdas told her through the interpreter that the peace which was locked up in her heart could be brought out on the plane of the mind, senses and body by the repetition of God's glorious name. The lady left satisfied.

"You Are On The Right Path"

Ramdas had received a letter from another German lady in Frankfurt that she was anxious to meet Ramdas, but owing to an attack of jaundice she could not do so and had to get herself admitted into a hospital for treatment. When Ramdas talked about this matter to Dr. Gunter, he volunteered to take Ramdas in his car to the hospital for meeting this lady. Accordingly, the same evening we—Mataji, Ramdas and Satchidananda—went with him to the hospital. The lady was, indeed, very happy to see us. Ramdas had about fifteen minutes' talk with her, Dr. Gunter being the interpreter. The lady put Ramdas some questions. She explained her spiritual experiences, such as seeing lights in her meditation and asked whether she was on the right path. Ramdas assured her that she was. She wanted Ramdas to chant for her the Ram-mantra, which Ramdas did and in which she also joined. Later on, she wished that Ramdas should write down the Mantra for her on a slip of paper. She was happy to have that slip. When we first saw her she was pale and worried, but before we left we found her lively and cheerful. She expressed her gratitude for our having come to see her. We then returned to the hotel.

The same evening we went to the meeting at Dr. Gunter's residence where a dozen members of both sexes of his group had gathered. At their request Ramdas spoke on Vedanta, God's name and the experience he had when he met Sri Ramana Maharishi. He also chanted the Ram-mantra. Then all sat together in silent meditation for a few minutes. The party, though small, consisted of devotees who had great hunger for God. The atmosphere was pure and holy.

Among the questions and answers at this meeting Ramdas is giving below two significant ones:

Q: People try to realize God, but they do not know that God is within their heart.

Ramdas: Yes, that is what is happening. You are He, but you do not know that. When you are awakened, at once you find out that you are He. There is a veil of ignorance separating you and God.

Q: What is the meaning of Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram?

Ramdas: Om = Impersonal Truth. Sri = Divine Power. Ram = God who is both Truth and Power. Jai Ram = Victory to God. Jai Jai Ram = Victory, Victory to God.

God, who is at once impersonal Truth and Divine Power, Victory to Thee—Victory, Victory to Thee.

When God is victorious in our heart, what happens is all darkness in it disappears—the ego-sense is conquered.

We also went to see a famous international fair. Here the products of the art and skill of several countries of the world were lavishly displayed. The whole show was a feast to the eyes of those who thirst for worldly pleasure. It looked like an enchanting palace of a fairy Queen.

From the windows of the hotel we could witness the scenes in the streets of Frankfurt. We found the Germans extremely industrious. They are a strong and well-built race, intelligent and talented to a high degree. We know how in scientific and industrial researches and inventions they stand in the front rank. In precision and skill in producing mechanical things they are unparalleled. Although they have seen terrible days, by their dogged determination for reconstructing their devastated cities, they have done miraculous feats. In the place of the destroyed buildings and structures new ones have risen up in an incredibly short time through their indefatigable labour. God is fulfilling Himself in various ways. God, who caused widespread destruction during the war, seemed to be busy now in the restoration of normal life!

An Initiation With Jesus' Name

We decided to go to Reutlingen and Munich before we left Germany. An invitation had come to us from our friend Mr. K. O. Schmidt at Reutlingen. We prepared ourselves to leave the hotel on a morning. When we were in the lobby, waiting for the taxi which was to take us to the railway station, a friend hurriedly came to us and said that he wanted urgently to meet Ramdas. He was in a state of excitement. After he was told who Ramdas was, he directly asked Ramdas to initiate him with God's name. Ramdas took him to a vacant room in the lobby. Ramdas sat on a chair while this friend kept standing.

He told Ramdas that he was coming from Switzerland where he had met some devotees of Lausanne who had attended the meetings at Geneva. On hearing from them about Ramdas, he was anxious to meet him and get initiated with the Divine Name. Ramdas asked him what Name he wanted. He said that he would like to get the name of Jesus. Ramdas agreed. That instant he knelt down and Ramdas whispered to him thrice the Name 'Jesus'. As he was repeating the Name himself, he was trembling, thrilled with a strange rapture. His eyes were moist and face flushed, which were the signs of the inner welling up of the pure emotions of love and devotion. He did not stay long. Having got what he wanted he took leave of us and departed.

Reutlingen

The train from Frankfurt took us to Reutlingen. The journey was a pleasant one, all the passengers in our compartment being kind and good to us. So we felt quite at home as if we were travelling in India. We reached Reutlingen in due time. At the railway station we were welcomed by Mr. Schmidt and Miss Kothen. Ramdas had known Mr. Schmidt through correspondence for several years. He is the editor of a German monthly called *Neugeist* (White Flag). He is also the District President of the International New Thought Alliance besides being the Chairman of the German New Thought Movement, which aims at producing an atmosphere of peace and goodwill in the world and banishing war. He is an energetic and enthusiastic worker who has been doing great service in the spiritual field for the last twenty years. He stands for universal religion, for the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. His magazine publishes translations of articles of all spiritual leaders of the world, ancient and modern.

Rani Lalita Devi and Sagarlal Gupta did not accompany us on this trip. From the railway station we walked up to the hotel nearby, where rooms had been previously arranged for us by Mr. Schmidt. Soon after, we were taken to the publishing house "Baum Verlag", from which the magazine *Neugeist* issued. Here Mr. Schmidt and his colleague Miss Kothen treated us with all kindness and affection. Schmidt put Ramdas a number of questions, one of which was: "What do you think about Germany, what is your impression?"

Ramdas replied: "They are a great people. Ramdas asserts that when God becomes your friend, the whole world is friendly to you. Ramdas meets only friends everywhere because God has become his friend. All of you are his friends. Wherever he goes, whether it is in Switzerland, Germany or any other country, he sees his own Beloved. You are all his Beloved. If you love the whole world, the whole world loves you. If you see God within you, you see Him everywhere."

Message To Germans

Mr. Schmidt also asked for a message to be published in his magazine. Ramdas gave him one which ran as follows:

> Ramdas' word to the readers of the **Neugeist** (White Flag) is that the magazine is doing very good work in bringing about unity and harmony among all the religions of the world. It holds that the great Teachers of the world came with the same purpose of liberating mankind from the clutches of lust, greed and wrath which are responsible for discord, disunion and war besides many other evils. Ramdas fully approves of the ideals of the **Neugeist.** His message to all Germans is to get thoroughly awakened to the consciousness of the Truth within them and thereby not only unite among themselves, but also realize their spiritual kinship with all peoples of the world by transcending the distinctions of race, creed and nationality.

Later during the conversation Schmidt described to us how he and his associates underwent severe persecution from Hitler's party when the Fuehrer was Germany's dictator. They had to stop the magazine and all religious activities. They were also imprisoned and had to bear great sufferings. During the regime of Hitler, a religion that preached world brotherhood was tabooed. On hearing about this sad story of repression Ramdas was reminded how frantic efforts have been made to time by power-mad men, drunk with the ambition for material supremacy, authority and wealth, to trample down religion. History presents innumerable cases of this nature. But it also shows how inevitably Truth or God triumphs in the end and the tyrants who strove against Him miserably perish. This is God's Lila. We see similar instances in the Puranic stories of India. India had her Hiranyakasipus and Ravanas who waged war against God and ultimately kissed the dust.

While leaving the place, Schmidt suggested that we might drive up a hill to see an ancient castle. The scenery all along the route was beautiful. The cold was severe. On reaching the castle we found that the front gate was locked and so it was not possible for us to get inside. We were told that in days of old some aristocratic gentry of the princely order used to live in this castle. During the last war it was converted into a prison. Now a part of it was occupied by some members of the aristocracy. We walked from the castle up to a point from where we had a charming view of the vast valley before us. By this time it was dark and so we returned to the hotel.

Solace To A Lady In Distress

After we reached our rooms we had a visit from a young lady. She was deeply agitated over some domestic trouble. She knelt before Ramdas and said, "I am coming from Munich. I heard that you were at Frankfurt and therefore went there to meet you. But before I reached there, you had come here. I want your guidance badly. I am in great difficulty. I am married and have two sons."

Ramdas: "Yes, it is good."

The Lady: "No, not very good when we have many things to face and people are against us. I am told by my husband that I should not speak to my children about God."

Ramdas: "Don't worry. Everything is for good. As your heart becomes pure, automatically everything will be solved. You can continue your devotional practices silently. Then you will see a miraculous change in your condition. There was another case in Geneva like yours. A lady had the same complaint; her husband was against her spiritual practices. Ramdas asked her to bring him to see Ramdas one day. Somehow he came. The first day he was not very much impressed. But the next day he came, heard Ramdas and told him he had completely changed. His wife was naturally very happy. So also you need have no anxiety about yourself. Everything will be set right. What you have to do is only to make your heart pure."

The Lady: "I was told by somebody that we should not repeat the name of Jesus more than a fixed number of times every day. The number may be increased but it should never be less. What do you advise me about my invocation?"

Ramdas: "What type of invocation do you do?"

The Lady: "My invocation is 'Jesus Christ, son of God, have pity on me."

Ramdas: "You can repeat this any number of times."

The Lady: "May I have the blessings, and may I touch the feet of Ramdas?"

Ramdas: "Yes, you have the blessings."

When Ramdas spoke these words, her face lit up with a blissful light. They must evidently have given her great solace. Thanking Ramdas with all her heart she left the room.

Next morning our Reutlingen friends took us for seeing some important sights. We visited a library, "Spendhaus," containing some century-old books and handwritten copies of the Bible on stiff paper and on donkey skin. These books were written by some priests as a labour of love. The paper and skin have endured the wear and tear of time. The writing on them was clear and beautiful like print. The books were very large in size. The man in charge of the library himself belonged to a religious order and he showed us these books with great reverence for them and for the writers.

After seeing the library we were taken to a museum where we found some relics dating back to thousands of years, carefully preserved. There were rare pieces of pottery, stones, inscriptions, bones of extinct animals, which have been excavated from the earth, belonging to an age which was calculated to be ranging from one thousand to three thousand years ago. There were also weapons, dresses, etc., used by Germans in olden days. They bore evidence to the state of culture and civilization prevalent in those ancient times.

From the museum our friends directed our steps to St. Mary's Church, which we were told was, in the beignning, a Catholic church and later on coverted by Martin Luther into a Protestant church. It was a huge edifice, built in the ancient Gothic style, solid and imposing. We went inside and walked round the pews and after standing reverently before the Cross for a few minutes, came out. Then we passed through an ancient arch. The structure was anything but symmetrical. It was crudely built, but it was a specimen of the ancient style of architecture.

God's purpose in bringing us to Reutlingen must have been to make us meet these two good friends, Mr. Schmidt and Miss Kothen, and see the museum, library and the church.

Munich

From Reutlingen we entrained to Munich. The young lady who had met us the previous evening in the hotel was a resident of Munich. She was travelling with us in the same train and was of great help to us when we had to change at a midway station. We reached Munich where Mr. Eduard Ullmann and other friends were waiting to welcome us. We were immediately taken to a hotel where we comfortably settled down. In the evening Mr. Ullmann took us to a huge club building in which a meeting was arranged. After waiting in the passage for some time we were ushered into a big hall which was nearly full of people who were eager to see and hear

Ramdas. An English-knowing German lady, Mrs. Gerda Walther, sat with Ramdas on the platform to interpret his speech in German. Ramdas talked on various topics, principally on the three Yogas taught in the Bhagavad Gita. There were some questions also put to him which he answered. One member of the audience asked:

Q: Is it by merit that we get the grace of God?

Ramdas: His grace comes without our deserving it. We cannot get grace by virtue of our so-called merit. Worst sinners have received grace and become pure and glorious.

Q: Some western circles believe that we must defend our religion with weapons of war if necessary.

Ramdas: That is not a correct view. You cannot defend Christianity by killing others. That is not according to the teachings of Christ, who stood for non-violence. By going contrary to his teachings, his followers will only be betraying him and committing wrong.

Before the close of the function Ramdas asked the audience to sit still in silent meditation and prayer for world peace and harmony. When he came out of the hall, a large number of the friends who attended the meeting crowded round him for autographs and personal talks. This went on for some time. When Ramdas was waiting to be taken back to the hotel, a stout elderly lady came forward and, taking Ramdas by the hand, pulled him out of the crowd. She led him directly to her old car in which she made him sit along with Satchidananda, and drove us with all joy to the hotel.

Next day there was only one function in the evening which was at Mr. Ullmann's house. Mr. Ullmann is the leader of the Munich branch of the New Thought Alliance. He is a steady worker, deeply interested in the cause he has espoused. Although we could not talk to him owing to the language difficulty, he was all kindness and affability to us. We could feel in his presence that he was in sympathy with all efforts for establishing world peace. May God fulfil his mission!

During the day, visitors were coming to interview Ramdas. As there was none to interpret the talks we had to resort to signs and sounds and we were able, to a large extent, to make ourselves mutually understood. Among the visitors there were some who came to ask about their marriage problems and some others asked about their material affairs. But there was one among them who was a sincere aspirant. He was Mr. Heinrich Reblitz, a young man of a very tall stature. He had been practising some Yoga discipline which involved great strain on his nerves. He demonstrated before Ramdas the mode of his sadhana. Ramdas discouraged him from continuing it and told him to have only simple Asanas, meditation and remembrance of God by repetition of His name. He liked Ramdas' advice and agreed to follow it. He expressed also a desire to become a Sannyasi.

In the evening Mr. Ullmann took us to his rooms high up in a big building. In a small room there was quite a number of devotees awaiting us. They put Ramdas some questions, which he answered. One of them is as follows:

Q: Buddhism is founded absolutely on the law of Karma. Yesterday you talked about the grace of the Divine. How can there be divine grace when there is Karma to be worked out?

Ramdas: God makes the law of Karma and if God cannot set aside the law, then the law is greater than God. This cannot be. So He must have the power to suspend it. The king makes the law that a man who commits murder will be punished with death. The king has also the power to pardon him. The law that he makes cannot be greater than him. Generally God does not interfere. He allows the Karma to operate. He may in special cases go beyond His law and by His grace free the soul from the bondage of Karma.

The meeting ended after silent meditation for a few minutes. Everyone must have exprerienced a rare satisfaction as was evident from their bright and cheerful faces.

Reblitz Becomes Brahmananda

Next morning Heinrich Reblitz, the young man who had come to see Ramdas the previous day, paid another visit to our room in the hotel. The following conversation took place.

Reblitz: "Swamiji, Pranams. I feel very happy to say Pranams. That unites me with you."

Ramdas: "Sit down, please."

Reblitz: "I want to make a request. I have already told you about my desire to become a Swami. I wish to become a Swami even before coming to India, here itself. I had written to Swami Omkar, but have not received a reply so far."

Ramdas: "To become a Swami you have to get initiation from another Swami who will give you the Mantra, the ochre-cloth and the name. Some other formalities also have to be gone through. Ramdas suggests that you may request Swami Omkar to initiate you."

Reblitz: "That will be possible only after going to India. Can Swami Ramdas not initiate me now?"

Ramdas: "Ramdas does not give formal Sannyas to anyone as he did not himself take it from anybody. Of course, he gives his permission to those who approach him, if he finds them fit for Sannyas. Then he gives them also the new name, and ochre-cloth with his blessings. That is all he does. Swami Satchidananda has taken it only in this way from Ramdas."

Reblitz: "Can Swami Ramdas not do the same thing for me also? I shall stop everything I have been doing as Sadhana if required, and follow what you order me to do."

Ramdas: "What are you going to do after taking up Sannyas, writing books?"

Reblitz: "I can work in the garden, in the fields or anywhere else, just to keep me going."

Ramdas: "What will you be actually doing?"

Reblitz: "As you ask me to do."

Ramdas: "Who will look after your mother, if you take up Sannyas? Does she agree to it?"

Reblitz: "Yes, she knows I will be a Swami. There are others to look after her."

Ramdas: "What Ramdas wants you to do is that from now on, whatever work you do must be entirely for God and God alone. You should not do anything that might involve telling lies and resorting to crooked means. Your dealings must be absolutely honest. What is your profession?"

Reblitz: "I paint pictures and work in gardens or farms."

Ramdas: "Whatever you do and whatever you earn must be for the service of the poor and suffering people around you. Serve your mother and serve others who are in distress. Repeat the Mantra that Ramdas is going to give you. "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram." This may be repeated silently or loudly, but it must be constant."

Reblitz: "May I do the Asanas and meditation as I have so far been doing and about which I have told you?"

Ramdas: "You need not do all the Asanas. How many Asanas do you know?"

Reblitz: "About thirty."

Ramdas: "You may do simple Asanas like Siddhasana, Padmasana, Sarvangasana and so on. Siddhasana and Padmasana are suitable for meditation. Don't do Sirsasana."

Reblitz: "If you ask not to do that, surely I won't."

Ramdas: "About meditation, you have been doing it for the past eight years. You may stop it now and do as Ramdas instructs you. Repeat the Ram-mantra constantly, sitting in Siddhasana or Padmasana with Yoga Mudra. Yoga Mudra symbolises the union of the Jivatma with Paramatma when the Jiva discards the three Gunas. Close your eyes and repeat Ram-mantra mentally and think of God as seated in your heart. God is within you and without you, everywhere. You have first to realize Him within you, and then you will see Him everywhere about you. So you have to meditate on Him within you. Now repeat the Mantra as Ramdas does: Om Sri Ram

Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram. Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram. Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram. What more do you want? Ramdas will give you a name also."

Reblitz: "Take me away from this Samsara. I swear today, I will lead a celibate life all through and live entirely for God."

Ramdas: "Ramdas is thinking what name he should give you. Have you any name to suggest that you may like?"

Reblitz: "I like the name Brahmananda."

Ramdas: "Yes, let your name be Brahmananda. Ramdas will send you an ochre-cloth from Frankfurt. You should not think of coming to India now. Your work is here. Serve your mother and the people in Germany who are in distress."

Reblitz: "I won't think of coming to India if you ask me not to do so."

Ramdas: "Blessings, blessings to you."

Since he got the initiation we could see on his face a light which was evidence of the deep peace and freedom he was feeling at heart. To adopt Sannyas was his long-cherished ambition and the fulfilment naturally gave him so much inward peace and joy.

CHAPTER VI

FRANCE

In the afternoon we left Munich by air for Paris, via Frankfurt. At Frankfurt we were joined by Rani Lalita Devi and Sagarlal Gupta. Here at the airport, where we had to wait for some time for the next plane, we met Atmananda (Mr. Cornelius Reuter), a disciple of Swami Omkar, who is editing a German magazine called *Friede* which means Peace. We had between us a happy half-an-hour. At the aerodrome we had the contact also of an English lady, Mrs. Elizabeth Paul, who was to travel with us in the same plane to Paris. She invited us to the Town and Country School in London, of which she is the Principal.

In due time we reached Paris. Mr. Jean Herbert and Miss Diana Mathot were at the aerodrome to receive us. Miss Diana welcomed us with all her heart and took us to her house in St-Leu-La-Foret about ten miles away from Paris. The house was an old-fashioned one. It had been tidied up and made comfortable for our stay by Diana and the girls, whom she called, 'the children'. They cheerfully served us with all love and affection.

A Feast of Spiritual Communion

We remained there for seven days during which large numbers of devotees and friends came from far and near, both morning and evening, to listen to the talks. There were questions and answers followed by meditation every day. It was quite a feast of spiritual communion, pure love and devotion overflowing the hearts of all. Diana was moving about attending to various acts of service as in a dream. She was intoxicated with a divine ecstasy. Her heart was abounding in love for us. Jean Herbert and his wife too were busy looking after our comforts, one in helping to make programmes and arranging our visits to other places in France, and the other aiding in the kitchen. Time here flew unawares as all were filled with unusual happiness and peace.

Among the visitors mention may be made of Mrs. Lizelle Reymond who had visited the Ashram twice years ago. We were happy to see each other. Ram-nam had by now got firm hold upon the friends who met Ramdas both at Geneva and other places. Many who attended the meetings in Geneva were also present here. Among them the couple who were the first to receive Ram-mantra in Geneva, used to sit close to Ramdas. One day Ramdas asked them how they were getting on. The lady, with a smile on her face, said: "From the time we received the Ram-mantra from you we have been experiencing immense peace at heart. Our joy is raised often to a pitch of ecstasy. We are deeply grateful to you for your kindness and grace." Ramdas noticed their faces were bright with a divine lustre.

Visit to Another Monastery

One day, as previously arranged, Jean Herbert took us to a monastery in Paris city. Mataji, Rani Lalita Devi and Sagarlal did not accompany us. We were welcomed by the abbot, Le Reverend Pere Bruno De Jesus-Marie, an elderly person. He led us into a big library room where we took our seats. An assistant of the abbot was also present. We started talking on the ways of approach to God, in the course of which Ramdas narrated his own spiritual experiences. The abbot listened to what Ramdas said with keen interest and remarked that Ramdas' experiences tallied with the experiences chronicled in the writings of the Christian saints. In that atmosphere we felt like members of the same family or group. Verily all those who are of God belong to one fraternity.

In the middle of the talk the abbot proposed that we should have prayer and meditation. So we spent about five minutes in silent meditation in our chairs, with the lights off, drinking deep at the spring of eternal bliss and peace. We wafted into and were lost in the Infinite where we realize there is only one Truth and one Spirit with nothing besides. After the meditation we renewed our talk with the abbot whose face was brightened with a new experience. He said that during the meditation he had an exalted spiritual vision, a vision for which he was longing for many years.

The following are extracts from the conversation between the abbot and Ramdas:

Combine Work and Worship

Abbot: There is an important difference between this order and the one you went to see in Switzerland. The order there resorts purely to contemplation; the only thing they do for others is to pray for them. But here we go further, sometimes teach and help others in many ways. I would like to know to which you give importance, whether in [illegible] active work in the world.

Ramdas: Ramdas agrees with you that we must combine work and worship.

Abbot: By work you may help others, relieve their distress, etc., is it not?

Ramdas: Yes, helping others, teaching them and doing whatever is necessary, as service to God.

Abbot: Apparently we view things with the same attitude and exactly in the same light. This seems to be quite confirmed by the Gospel.

Ramdas: Ramdas does not want anybody to lead only a contemplative life. They must serve their fellow-beings in a spirit of perfect selflessness in order to relieve their distress, and this, Ramdas believes, is one of the main teachings of Jesus Christ. When he said, "Love thy neighbour as thyself" he did not mean that we should love merely by the heart alone, but we should also show our love in action, love him by relieving him of the difficulties which he has been subjected to.

Abbot: Do you think that prayer is more important than action, although that type of action is prayer in itself?

Ramdas: Prayer is the background for action.

Abbot: Are you certain that until the end of your life you will no longer be subject to diabolical temptations and that you are entirely free from them?

Ramdas: Ramdas feels entirely free from them because God has taken him up. If he had held on to God, there would have been a likelihood of a fall, but as God has held Ramdas and he is fully conscious of it, there is no chance of a fall or separation from Him. God's grip on him is so firm. God has taken Ramdas up and he is a child in the arms of his mother, God. So there is absolutely no fear of a fall at any time. This assurance has been given to Ramdas by Him.

Importance of Brahmacharya

Abbot: Can such a spiritual height as has been realized by you be reached by men even without Brahmacharya?

Ramdas: No, not without Brahmacharya.

Abbot: In the Christian Church Brahmacharya is not considered absolutely necessary. For priests and monks, of course, strict Brahmacharya is essential, but they also say that married people living in the world can attain perfection.

Ramdas: After leading the usual life of the family for some years, the person must abstain from sex and become a Brahmacharin, a man of perfect purity. Only then the devotional practices he has gone through in his family life will attain fruition. Otherwise he is not likely to reach that spiritual perfection which a man who observes continence can reach. Sexual desire is a great obstacle to God-realization. So long as one is subject to it, one cannot have perfect purity in thought, word and deed, which is essential for realization.

An Instrument for Working Miracles

Abbot: Do you work miracles of any kind?

Ramdas: Ramdas has been made an instrument by God for working some miracles. He is not personally responsible for them. People who are unwell wish him to go to them and place his hands on them. Then miraculously they are cured. They attribute it to Ramdas. Ramdas tells them that it is not by his power that they are cured, but by God's grace. In all humility Ramdas can say that it is not he who does it, but God.

Abbot: Is it within your power to see the truth within people; to see them as they are, when you look at them?

Ramdas: Ramdas sees the Divine in everybody and God does not want him to understand how a man is and what is in his mind. He has given him the vision to see His divine radiance and divine existence only.

Abbot: When somebody comes to you who is in a bad condition, does it mean that you do not realize his bad state at all?

Ramdas: Ramdas sees outwardly that the person is very much depressed. After remaining in Ramdas' company for some time, his mind becomes calm and peaceful and he goes away cheerfully. This is what Ramdas has noticed.

Abbot: The obscure night of the soul—is it bound to happen?

Ramdas: Yes. In the life of every spiritual aspirant such periods do come. When the mind gets depressed, he misses his contact with God and he feels that he is a fallen being. At that time he is seized with utter despair.

Abbot: In the life of St. Thomas of Aquinus, a woman came to tempt him and he threatened her away with a firebrand. In the life of St. John of the Cross we understand that he was also tempted by a woman, but he spoke to her very kindly and lovingly. The result was that she was transformed. Which of the two methods would you prefer?

Ramdas: Surely the way of giving love, treating gently and transforming the woman.

After the conversations were over, we came out of the monastery along with the abbot and his assistant.

Taking leave, when we were on the steps coming down to the road, Satchidananda took some cine pictures of us. What is important here is not the film, but the joy we derived standing together expectantly in child-like glee and anticipation when the camera clicked before us. Verily, God's devotees are His children. When love inspires us the heart is filled with the sweetest music of free and unconventional play of divine joy. We returned to Diana's place after a delightful time with the abbot.

"The Most Precious Thing on Earth"

On another day, as prearranged, we went to the Ramakrishna Mission at Gretz. Swami Siddheswarananda, the President, on coming to know from Ramdas that he was to visit France, had invited the party for lunch and a few hours' stay in the Ashram. The Swamiji had visited Anandashram some years ago, and given us the pleasure of his company for three days. When our car stopped at the entrance of the Mission building, we saw the Swamiji waiting for us. He welcomed Ramdas and garlanded him, overflowing with love and affection. He took Ramdas by the hand and led him up the steps into the Ashram. Ramdas can imagine what joy he must have felt to see Ramdas at his place. Ramdas' heart was equally flooded with untold delight on seeing him. The Swamiji was not keeping well and had some difficulty in climbing up the steps, but he did it all with a smile on his face and love in his heart. We went straight to the shrine room and joined the prayer conducted there by Swami Nishreyasananda, another monk of the Ramakrishna Mission.

The next item of the programme was lunch. We, about two dozen persons, sat at a long table and had our food. Many other French devotees of the Mission also joined us at the lunch, taking it standing. After the meal Ramdas was taken to the private room of Swami Siddheswarananda who made this child lie down on a sofa. He sat beside Ramdas and passed his hands over Ramdas' body with infinite love and tenderness. His eyes were moist and he said, "Swamiji, you are the most precious thing on this earth." Ramdas was thrilled by these words. The Swamiji's loving touch was a healing balm to the tired body.

After some time Ramdas was asked to go to the central hall where a large congregation of devotees of the Mission had assembled. As the room was too small for the gathering, the adjoining rooms were also filled by the visitors. There was a microphone so that the talk might reach the ears of all in the serveral rooms. In answer to a question Ramdas delivered a long discourse, in the course of which he said:

God is personal and impersonal

To the question whether God is personal or impersonal, Ramdas' answer is that God is at once personal and impersonal. You can behold Him as everything and in everything in the universe. At the same time you maintain a close relationship with Him in His personal aspect. He becomes your constant companion. You can talk to Him, you can play with Him, and you can even joke with Him. He will be so intimate with you. He will protect you in ever so many ways and look after you mysteriously. This is true not only in the case of a particular devotee, but is equally applicable to all devotees in all parts of the world who have surrendered up their lives to Him entirely. In such cases He grants the devotees His universal vision and still remains their constant companion. So He is an impersonal Person, that is, He is not only the all-pervading, nameless and formless Reality, but He is also all that have names and forms. As your constant companion He guides you and looks after you just as a mother looks after the child. You feel His protection every moment of your life in a strange way. You can talk to Him and look upon Him as your father, mother, comrade or master. How this is possible is very difficult to describe. Ramdas wants to tell you how this is possible, but it is very hard.

Divine Grace

Now Ramdas is going to speak to you a few words about grace. Without grace nothing can be done by us. Many people think that we are doing everything by our own will and strength. This is perfectly false. It is the divine grace alone, it is the divine power alone, that is responsible for our doing anything. Since we do not know that divine grace is working through us and we think that we are doing everything ourselves, all our actions, thoughts and feelings get vitiated. When we root out the ego-sense in us and God's light and power flow in us, we become conscious that the divine power is responsible

for all our movements and actions. It is by His grace alone that our mind turns towards God.

Ramdas talked on and on, without any sense of time. He was in a high state of ecstasy. Words flowed out of his mouth like a stream. He talked for over an hour. Swami Siddheswarananda was highly pleased. At the close of the meeting Prasanna was requested to sing the Ram-mantra—Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram. She had learned the tune of the Mantra from Mataji when we were at her place in Geneva. Prasanna possessed a sweet and melodious voice. She sang in the tune taught to her and the congregation sang after her in chorus. The whole building was then filled with such spiritual fervour by the music of the Mantra that all hearts welled up with pure joy and peace. It was an unforgettable occasion. The function over, we came out and got into the cars after taking leave of Swami Siddheswarananda, Swami Nishreyasananda and other inmates and devotees of the Ashram. At parting, the Swamiji was visibly moved and Ramdas also was affected likewise.

On the way back to St-Leu-La-Foret, Ramdas accompanied by Satchidananda and Jean Herbert visited the place of Mr. Edouard C. Symours, who was ill, the rest of the party going straight to St-Leu-La-Foret. This friend had correspondence with Ramdas for some years. Owing to his ill-ness he could not meet Ramdas at Diana's house. His brother and he welcomed us to his small house and we were taken to his private room. The friend expressed his great joy at Ramdas' visit to his house. He asked Ramdas some questions on spiritual discipline and attainment. He evinced yearning for God-realization. Ramdas gave him some instructions and left the place.

The day of our departure from France arrived. The parting scene here, as in other places, was most touching. Diana, the girls and the friends who were frequently paying us visits, were moved to tears. We emplaned for Brussels.

A few extracts from the talks at Diana's house in France are given below:

The Joy of Japa

Q: It is advised that we should not do Japa as a stern and grim duty.

Ramdas: What you say is true. Japa must be done with intense love and devotion for the object of your worship, that is, God. The Japa becomes spontaneous and gives you rare joy as you go on doing it. You should not do it as a discipline imposed upon you by somebody else. If you do not get joy in doing Japa, you better not do it, because it will not help you. When you have love for God, Japa must give you great joy. Therefore mystics say that repetition of God's name gives them ecstasy, a sweetness and joy which is indescribable. This shows that it is not mere mechanical repetition that helps us but a spontaneous outflow of our love towards God in the repetition of His name.

Self-surrender

Q: What is the importance of self-surrender on the spiritual path?

Ramdas: Self-surrender means giving up of the ego-sense. Until the ego-sense is completely eliminated, we cannot realize God. Ego-sense is a screen between us and God. If you remove the screen you know you are He.

Q: Can we feel that God is doing everything even if we do not act morally?

Ramdas: We cannot act immorally if we know God is making us do everything.

Q: Is grace for everybody or are some more privileged than others to get it?

Ramdas: Grace is pouring on all of us alike. Some receive it and some do not. As Ramdas mentioned somewhere else, some people open the windows of their heart to receive grace, while some others keep them closed and they don't get it. But even to keep the windows of the heart open requires some inner aspiration and longing, and that longing can come to us only through the kindness and grace of God.

Who is the Guru?

Q: Can you tell us what exactly the Guru is?

Ramdas: Guru is a spiritual guide. Just as you require a teacher to teach you arts and sciences relating to the world of nature around you, you need a guide on the spiritual path. As a professor should be qualified on the subject he teaches, a spiritual guide must be qualified to guide you. He must be perfect in the science of spirituality, which means that he must have attained the realization of God. When you have such a guide you can safely entrust yourself to his hands and you are sure to progress on the path without any hindrance, provided your aspiration is intense and you follow his guidance. The meaning of the word Guru is "dispeller of darkness." In the state of ignorance your heart is filled with darkness as you are oblivious of God. You deny God and do not at all take into account His existence, nor do you seek Him. But the Guru awakens in you faith in God and guides you along the path so that you may ultimately reach Him. So the work of the Guru is to awaken God-consciouness in you and lead you to Him.

Q: Can daily work be integrated with spiritual life?

Ramdas: Provided the work is done selflessly and in a spirit of dedication to God.

Q: I presume then the work itself becomes our spiritual discipline.

Ramdas: Yes, then work becomes worship. The Bhagavad Gita describes this as Nishkama Karma, meaning desireless action, selfless action.

Food First, Then God

Q: When you get in touch with people who are very poor, should you not first give them food and then only talk to them about God?

Ramdas: Certainly, you should first relieve them of their hunger, and then only talk to them about God, if they are interested in it. If you start talking about God when they are hungry, they won't listen to you, but go away.

Q: If we happen to live with somebody who is a terrible pessimist and we do not succeed in doing anything to him, is it all right that we should go away for a while before we attempt again?

Ramdas: Yes, it is better to go away for a while to charge yourself with greater spiritual strength so that you can when you next meet your pessimist friend, change him by your influence. If your spiritual strength is not sufficient, it is quite likely that his pessimistic influence will act on you and you too will become a pessimist.

Service heals sorrow

Q: Can anything special be done for a mother who cannot get over the death of one of her children? I have seen such cases where mothers never recovered after they lost one of their children.

Ramdas: That is what Ramdas also has observed in some cases. They cannot forget the loss. There is however one way, and that is to keep them engaged in some service, service of a selfless nature rendered for the good of others. In that service the mother will, to a large extent, forget her sorrow, although it cannot be wiped out completely.

Q: How can we get out of Viraha, the agony of separation from God, when we are in it?

Ramdas: By surrendering ourselves to God.

Q: When we have lost faith at that time?

Ramdas: Then contact a saint. Seek the company of an advanced soul, preferably one who has realized God. The company of such a soul will enable you to lift yourself from despondency and you will find reunion with God by his grace and help.

Q: Are there many such available?

Ramdas: Seek and you shall find. Aspire and you shall get.

Q: When we actually feel for the suffering of others, can that help those who suffer?

Ramdas: By feeling for them, sharing the suffering with them, we can bring relief to them to some extent, but the better way is to relieve it by rendering some tangible help.

Q: Is it possible to have the thought of God always under modern conditions of life?

Ramdas: It is quite possible if only we really aspire for God and make an attempt to keep Him always in our thought. An example of one who has done so is sitting before you. He belongs to modern times and not to the past.

Through Forms Reach the Formless

Q: Are we developing too much personal attachment to you? If so how can we stop it?

Ramdas: You need not stop it. You can make Ramdas a stepping stone to rise to the higher consciousness, which is the real consciousness. You may attach yourself to his form and through that form reach the Formless. Very often some prop is necessary for us in order to walk on the path and after we have gained sufficient strength we can throw off that prop and walk by ourselves. We require a ladder to climb to some height and after we reach there, we have no more need of the ladder. So if you are attached to Ramdas' form, let that form be a help to you to rise beyond all forms.

Q: What relation is there between hope and faith?

Ramdas: Ramdas remembers having read a book called "The Greatest Thing in the World." In that book the beginning is, "Which is the greatest—faith, hope or love? Love is the greatest." Ramdas agrees with this.

CHAPTER VII

BELGIUM

Brussels

We reached Brussels in the afternoon. At the airport we were welcomed by two Beligian couples—Mr. and Mrs. Haesaerts, who had invited us to Belgium when they came to see us at Geneva, and Mr. and Mrs. Coulon whom also we had met there. Mr. and Mrs. Haesaerts took us to their house where we felt quite at home. We were treated with great hospitality and, throughout the period we were with them, the lady was all joy and laughter. Her husband also was kind and affectionate. Their two children, a girl and boy, were coming to our rooms frequently during the day and liked to remain with us. They were ever willing to serve us and get us whatever we wanted. In many ways these children poured out their innocent love on us.

The meetings here were held in an upstair room of an outhouse in the same compound. Sometimes the small room was overcrowded. The questions asked here were mostly of an intellectual nature relating to war and the possibility of God's existence. Here are a few of them:

Way to World Peace

Q: People are prepared to fight all over the world and there is no good preaching.

Ramdas: The solution rests, as Ramdas told you just now, in our perfectly loving everybody and remaining non-violent towards all. If we set the example we shall make others also free from hatred. Example is better than precept. Ramdas does not go about preaching to anybody, but when they put him questions he has to tell them that there can be peace in the world only if we love each other. By so doing we get happiness for ourselves and give happiness to others. The way to attain this happiness is by eradicating all ill-will and hatred

from our heart. Then only we can love others in the true sense of the term and by that love develop harmony in our heart and harmony outside.

Find Peace Within

Q: Shall we have a day when we have such type of peace in the world?

Ramdas: Ours is to strive for peace, and in striving so we shall be happy. When we try jointly through the grace of God and our prayers to Him to bring about peace in the world, peace is bound to come. We must try to get rid of our petty jealousies so that the world catastrophe may be avoided. But what happens now is that people have no faith in God. God is not far away from us. He is within our heart and He is absolute peace. When we tune our mind with absolute peace, we naturally create an atmosphere of peace around us. Individual as well as collective effort is necessary. Individuals should try to find peace within themselves and all such individuals in all parts of the world should jointly try to bring peace and this will definitely have its effect.

Q: What should be our attitude if we are forced to join the war?

Ramdas: Refuse to wage war and face the consequences. It would be better to be killed than to kill our brethren.

Q: What do you think of the theory of Avatar? Do you believe that Christ was an Avatar?

Ramdas: Ramdas does believe in Avatars and takes Jesus as one of them.

At the meetings Mr. Coulon was often the interpreter, as also our hostess. Ramdas spent a happy time with the visitors.

For the two days we lived in Belgium we had our lunch at Mr. Coulon's place, where his wife treated us with warm affection and hospitality. Whenever we were in their house, this lady used to be in a state of exultation, her face suffused with smiles.

CHAPTER VIII

HOLLAND

The Hague

The next country we visited was Holland. We alighted from the plane at Amsterdam where we were received by our friend Mr. Guy M. de Gelder who took us in a car to The Hague where he lived. He was a boarder in a house owned by a Dutch lady. We were comfortably lodged in the rooms provided for us. Mr. Gelder was enthusiastic in the work of the Spiritual Development Centre of which he was the founder and which had a membership of about fifty or sixty persons of both sexes. He was guiding the members of his organisation on the path of divine realization.

On the first evening of Ramdas' arrival at The Hague a meeting was arranged in the sitting room in our residence. There was a fairly large attendance and Ramdas answered the questions put to him by the audience. At the next day's meeting, as requested by friends Ramdas spoke on Anandashram and its activities. All of them listened with rapt attention and appreciated the service done in the Ashram. In the course of the speech Ramdas laid stress on the importance of service to humanity. He said:

Divinise Work

Do not renounce work, but divinise work. Do everything in all humility, in full submission to the will of the Divine. Who is a true devotee of God? He who serves mankind. We have been taught that in each and every one of us dwells the Divine and when we serve all, we really serve God. It is said that if a man says he loves God and does not love his neighbour, he is a liar. If we displease or hate anybody, we are not true lovers of God. If we love each other, God is highly pleased with us. That is why Ramdas often quotes Jesus. You will find the same teachings in all the religions of the world. Love is the thing to be practised in our life. If there is no love in our heart it will be insipid, arid, and we have no hope of gaining God's grace. If we want God's grace, we have to be sympathetic and helpful to humanity. Then

He will make us feel His presence every moment of our life. If we humble ourselves and be lovers of our fellow-beings, then only we put into practice the great teachings of Jesus.

We met here a young man named Mr. Ernst Verwaal, who got deeply attached to us. He had lived in a Russian monastery for a few months. He hung on Ramdas' words whenever he opened his mouth to speak on any spiritual subject. He expressed the desire to come to India some day and be in our Ashram for a few days. He was a law student residing in the same house as Gelder's. Among the visitors were some young girls deeply interested in religion.

One day in the company of Gelder, Verwaal and the girl aspirants, we went to see the famous garden of the town. It was indeed most attractive with its lavish display of flowers of various charming colours. When we walked through the garden we felt as if we were moving in a paradise. The beautiful flower beds, rich and luxuriant, were a veritable feast to the eyes. The air was cool. A chill breeze was blowing, but we passed on from one part of the garden to the other, enjoying the glory of God revealed before us in all its magnificence.

Holland is mainly an agricultural country and the extensive farms all over the land produce the chief wealth of the country, namely dairy products, fruits and foodstuffs, which are exported to various parts of the world. The sight of the vast green meadows on our way from Amsterdam to The Hague and back was great relief to our eyes after living for some time amidst the studded houses in the cities. The sea being close to The Hague, we saw in the evenings many people going to the beach for recreation.

Mr. Gelder was very kind to us during our stay with him. He impressed upon the friends who paid us visits, the importance of Ramdas' mission and the spiritual benefit derived from his company.

When the time came for our departure to England, after the usual leave taking, we left for London by air from Amsterdam.

CHAPTER IX

ENGLAND

London

England was once the most coveted place for Indians from their school days. It was considered to be a land of enchantment especially by those who looked up to it through the long distance with an expectant eye and a hopeful heart. To go to England and return was to achieve celebrity. This was before India attained freedom. Today the tide has turned. We see that people outside are drawn towards India, attracted by her spiritual greatness.

We arrived at the London airport and were received by Mr. Howard Williams, Mr. George A. Dudley, Mr. Price and Sri Manibhai Patel's niece, Srimati Shantaben. They took us in their cars to Hayes in Middlesex, where our host Sri Manibhai Patel lived. We were comfortably lodged at Jayaram House. Manibhai Patel was not there as, due to a sudden attack of illness, he had to be admitted a few days ago in the hospital for treatment. For the first few days Mr. W. A. Caro, Mr. Williams and Mr. George came to us often. Later on some ladies from outside London, and a few Sufi friends also paid us frequent visits. Srimati Kanchanben, wife of Dr. P. Kothari whom we knew intimately in India and who now lived in London, was another who was often coming to see us. She could not resist her outburst of joy and surprise when she met us, because she had never dreamt of seeing us in London. Mrs. Williams who had played a great part in making the house in which we stayed tidy and comfortable for us, was also there.

Milton's Cottage

Our first excursion during our stay in London was to Milton's Cottage, situated in Chalfort St. Giles near Hayes. Milton is well known as one of the greatest poets of England whose fame was established when he wrote

"Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained". The sonorous verses of "Paradise Lost" which Ramdas used to recite aloud to himself when young, are still ringing in his ears. The majestic march of words in this great poem is like the course of the hosts of angels striding across the heavens. This blind poet has been a source of inspiration and delight to his innumerable readers and will continue to be so to millions in future. Really, when we entered this holy building we felt as if we were stepping into a temple with all devotion and reverence. The presence of this great man was felt in his study, living room and other apartments. We passed on from room to room looking at the articles which he had used, his manuscripts, books, photographs, kettle, and other things.

Milton was a highly religious man. He believed in the divine dispensation. His last days of blindness he spent in conjuring up the wonderful picture which he depicted in his two monumental works. Heaven, earth and hell were his themes. God, satan and the first created man and woman were the subjects he clothed with the sublime colour and beauty of his genius and talent. Ramdas was simply charmed with this place and he felt he was treading on hallowed ground. We bought some picture postcards of the inside and outside views of the cottage. Before we got into the car we gave a last lingering look at that ancient abode with love and regard for the great poet who lived at one time in it.

Shanti Sadan

The next day we paid a visit to Shanti Sadan founded by Dr. Hari Prasad Sastriji. Hari Prasad Sastriji is a saintly personality who has been doing laudable service for the spiritual uplift of many aspirants looking up to him for guidance. He has the reputation of a long record of work extending for over thirty years in London. Shanti Sadan is housed in a beautiful building in which he resides and carries on his activities. This great soul, a spiritual beacon to his followers, was suffering from heart trouble when we met him. Still he was untiringly devoting himself to the task of guiding them on the divine path.

Sastriji had arranged a nice little function on the occasion of our visit. After Ramdas was received by him in the library we went together to the hall where his disciples had gathered to welcome us. Sastriji and Ramdas sat side by side. When the reading of the address, poems and prayers were over, Sastriji wished that Ramdas should give a discourse. Ramdas talked for about fifteen minutes on Universal Love and Service. The assembled friends listened with rapt attention in an atmosphere of perfect calmness and serenity. Ramdas felt we were in a holy place; undoubtedly the devotees who were there must also have been filled with divine peace and joy.

After Ramdas finished his speech Sastriji spoke a few words expressing his delight in having us in their midst. He also prayed to God that Ramdas' mission of love may be crowned with all success. Here Ramdas cannot resist saying again that the blessings of saints are simply invaluable. Whenever Ramdas receives such blessings he feels that God's grace itself is poured on him in a deluge. All glory to saints!

The function, though a short one, was a great strain on the weak health of Sastriji. He was all kindness and love towards us. We stood up and having paid our parting respects to the saint, left Shanti Sadan and went back to Jayaram House.

The Hindu Association of Europe

The prominent Hindu residents of London have formed an organisation called the Hindu Association of Europe. Its object is to create a feeling of fellowship among Indians in Europe by holding in the association building meetings of social, political and national importance. These friends arranged a meeting here for our reception.

On our way to the meeting we had to attend the wedding of an Indian with an Irish girl. The former has been residing for a long time in London and practically settled down there. God's ways are wonderful.

He wanted Ramdas to witness a wedding in London on this occasion! It was a big function and hundreds of people belonging mostly to the upper classes had gathered there. The marriage was celebrated according to Vedic rites. It was altogether, what in Indian language we call, a big Tamasha—great fun. The world is indeed a bigger Tamasha in which this marriage was a show within a show.

From there we went to the Hindu Association hall. It was a purely social function. Still it had its spiritual significance as there were many among the audience who were religious-minded. Ramdas met here some friends whom he had known in India, including Sri Gunvantrai Kamdar, his wife and some others. Ramdas was asked to speak and he did so for about half an hour, conveying his message, in the course of which he said:

Realize your unity

Every atom of this universe is filled with divine light and power. This is what we have to realize. We are one not only inwardly, but outwardly also. This is the message of Vedanta handed over to us from the Rishis and the great Avatars of India. The same message, you will find, has been carried throughout the length and breadth of the world by various other Teachers like Jesus Christ and Mohammed. Buddha too preached the great truth of Ahimsa which was carried to Burma, Japan and China. All these great Teachers told us that we are to live in union with each other and not to fight. This message which has come down to us from the Rishis of India is indeed a great treasure which we must cherish.

Ramdas may not omit to mention here that some members of the audience took objection to Ramdas' ranking Mohammed with the Hindu Avatars in his speech. It is strange that such a spirit of narrowness is still prevalent in an enlightened place like London where all classes and creeds should, losing their distinctions, mingle together with a feeling of equality, harmony and friendliness. The world has divisions enough on the score of various mundane values, but to create differences in the name also of religion is really most reprehensible. We live on the same earth and we are children of one universal parent, God—God of all people.

With School Children

The next place of our visit was the Town and Country School, about thirty miles from Middlesex. We went there in response to the invitation from the Principal, Mrs. Elizabeth Paul, whom we first met at Frankfurt airport. In this school we had indeed a most joyful time. The Principal and other teachers welcomed us with great delight. We were taken to a central room where children, big and small, belonging to both the lower and higher classes, had gathered. As suggested by the teachers, the little ones put Ramdas some questions about India and Indian ways of life. One of the questions asked was, "Can you tell us something about your religion?"

In reply Ramdas said:

Grow into World Citizens

This friend (Ramdas), coming all the way from distant India, is very happy to see you all. You look like little flowers in the garden of God. He loves you very much. The God that he has found is in the hearts of all of you. God, apart from you, is not God for him. To look at you is to look at God.

If we want to see God, we must see Him in our fellow-beings. We must love and serve them. That is the true worship of God. He is not far away in the heaven, but He is here with us, at all times, and His presence can be felt provided we pray to Him, remember Him. By praying to Him we make our life pure and glorious. If you want to walk on the path of righteousness and truth, it is necessary that you should pray to Him constantly, open your heart to Him and allow His light and grace to pour into you and thus make your life divine.

What more can Ramdas tell you than this? He has told you what he understood about God and what he knew about God. He wishes that you should also believe in God and draw inspiration from Him by loving Him, by praying to Him and allowing his Light and Power to work in you so that you may grow into true citizens, not merely of England, but of the world.

Ramdas was perfectly at home in the midst of these loving children. They were also, as Ramdas made out, feeling quite familiar with us, without looking upon us as strangers. After about fifteen mintues we were taken round to see the classes and then we came out into the back garden, the children following us. We moved about freely with them in the open. It was a happy scene. The children were gleefully skipping and playing. Mrs. Paul had, before we went to the garden, introduced the children to us one by one as they passed us in a queue. Ramdas could here form a clear idea of how an English school is conducted. There was perfect discipline among the children and a deep interest in their all-round welfare on the part of the teachers. We spent about an hour in the school, the memory of which will ever be fresh in our minds.

The Sage of Chichester

Many readers of this book must have heard of Mr. Henry Thomas Hamblin of Chichester, England, who has been editing a magazine called *The Science of Thought Review*. Mr. Hamblin is a spiritually illumined personality. Ramdas has been in correspondence with him for many years. His magazine publishes articles from his pen giving precious spiritual advice and instructions founded upon his own experiences for the enlightenment of its numerous readers. His way of approach to God is a simple one. It is devotion and surrender. He says that prayer and the inner feeling of divine presence constitute the means by which the soul can find union with God. Thousands of aspirants have derived valuable help from his inspiring teachings. Although we dearly loved each other by contact through correspondence, Ramdas never thought a day would come when we would meet each other in person. Such a memorable day came now.

Having written to Mr. Hamblin earlier about our proposed visit and received a letter of welcome from him, we started at noon from Middlesex in a car to meet him at his home in Chichester. The car was driven by our loving young friend George, who was ever ready to serve us. Passing through various country-sides of England we came to the famous Windsor Castle and stopped for a while outside to have a view of it. We had also the pleasure of visiting on the way a well known old cathedral of Chichester. We got down from the car, went inside the cathedral and saw the images, carvings and paintings and other objects of religious interest. On coming out we saw the steeple kissing the sky. Even when we were seeing these our thoughts were with Hamblin whom we were to meet soon. The car sped on and passed through hilly meadows on which brown cows with white spots were grazing, a sight that charmed our eyes, especially of Mataji who is fond of cows. The vast sylvan scenes, luxuriant with green fields, pastures and trees fascinated us and gave us rare exaltation.

Love meets Joy

We now neared the place where Hamblin lived. A turn and a few yards, we were at Bosham House. On the lawn lying between the cottage and the Science of Thought Review Office, Mr. Hamblin and two others were waiting to receive us.

We got down from the car and Ramdas walked up to this loving friend, and soon our hands were locked in a hearty hand-shake with all love and goodwill. The joy that welled up in our hearts at this meeting does not lend itself to expression. The fair and handsome face of this Sage of Chichester was flushed, his eyes aglow with a divine lustre. Ramdas lost all sense of separateness. It appeared as if love and joy had assumed human forms and met in the oneness of spiritual realization. Hamblin was so much overpowered by love that he continued shaking Ramdas' hands for several minutes. He asked Ramdas whether he would prefer to go first to his office or to his home. Ramdas preferred the latter and we strode up to his sweet little cottage where we were welcomed by his devout wife. We sat down in his study. There was an atmosphere of rare peace in this simple cottage.

At the very outset Hamblin suggested that all of us should sit silently in meditation and so everyone in the room became calm and still, Hamblin and Ramdas sitting close together. This was only for five minutes. We enjoyed a state of superconscious ecstasy. When the meditation was over, Hamblin remarked that he had a wonderful experience of divine light and peace. Soon after, we were joined by Mr. Richard Whitwell and his wife who came by train from their place a little farther away with a view to meet Ramdas. When they sat with us we were further saturated with joy. Ramdas was asked some questions by Richard Whitwell and Hamblin and he went on talking on various spiritual subjects.

Some portions of the conversations are given below:

Spiritual Healing

Hamblin: I met brother Mandus. He goes about healing. He has a gift of healing. People go to him to get healed. He puts his hand on them and many of their diseases are cured. Not always successful, of course. I have seen people who were crippled with arthritis, etc. He just goes to them, holds the arm and joints, fits the dislocated part in the right place, and they get up and walk away. That sort of work he does. He gives long lectures.

Ramdas: The Divine is not far off. He is within us. Be conscious of Him and you feel His presence every minute within you. Healing power also comes to you automatically. Healing is not done purposely sometimes. By your very touch the person is healed. In the scriptures it is said that divine power is transmitted to another in three ways. By thought, sight and touch. A saint can, by his thought, at once spiritually awaken a man. By looking into the eyes of a person he pours into him the divine power by which he is awakened from within. The same thing is done by touch also. This very power can be used for healing diseases too of persons.

Four Stages of God-consciousness

Hamblin: May I ask a question? When you arrive at God-consciousness and realize that you are everywhere, what comes next?

Ramdas: There are four stages. Ramdas will describe them. One is when, by total surrender to the divine will, the ego is dissolved completely. Ego-lessness means realization of the all-pervading Spirit or God. Then we know that we and that Spirit are one. So long as the ego persists we are not aware of that Spirit and we do not know our identity with It. After that comes the vision of the Divine everywhere in the manifestation. The whole universe is seen thereafter as the expression of that Spirit. We see God everywhere. But there is a third stage still. In that we see the manifest and the unmanifest as the two aspects of one Truth which is beyond both, which is unthinkable, incomprehensible and in-expressible. We can express something about the static and the dynamic or the formless and the form aspects, but that which is beyond these is incomprehensible and ineffable. The dynamic, the static and the unthinkable all together make the supreme God-head. He is all-inclusive and all-transcendent. Even after realizing that, there is the fourth stage in which we keep up a relationship with God. It is purely personal. He is our constant companion. We can talk to Him. We can feel His presence. That is the best and the sweetest relationship. Having had all the earlier experiences, we still enjoy a close relationship with the Divine in His personal presence, and that presence Ramdas has been asked by so many to define. But it is very difficult to define it. He is the Impersonal Person.

Go beyond Prayer

Hamblin: We do not chant God's name, but we have an inward prayer which we go on repeating. That amounts to the same thing. When I had to pray for things, I found I had only to thank Him. I went on saying "Thank Thee". That became a practice and I found that there was a glow in the heart. That is one way.

Ramdas: We must transcend the stage of prayer also. Because utter dependence on God does not admit of any prayer. You live and move in Him. Then why pray to Him? You are completely under His protection and you are aware of it. A child has nothing to pray to its mother when the mother looks after it. The mother knows what is good for the child.

The reminder from Mrs. Hamblin that tea and cakes, which she specially prepared for us, were ready brought us to the consciousness of our surroundings. We did not feel the passage of time. Really, we lived then not in time, but in eternity. We had our tea, coffee and cakes and then Hamblin proposed that we should go to pay a visit to his office. We got up and made our way towards it, which was only about half a furlong from the cottage, Hamblin leading. It was a joy to be inside this neat and well ordered place where the publishing and editing of Hamblin's books and the monthly magazine were carried on. He had a number of assistants who, it was evident from their looks, were greatly devoted to him. They were doing their work silently and efficiently.

It was now time for us to return to Middlesex. Before we got into the car, we met again at the place where we had shaken hands and exchanged greetings on arrival. We made a nice little group—Mr. and Mrs. Hamblin, Mr. and Mrs. Whitwell, Dr. and Mrs. Luftig, George and five of us. Hamblin was kind enough to present every one of us with an autographed copy of his photo. We shook hands, our hearts overflowing with love and joy, and got into the car, looking at the party which we left behind, our eyes gazing as long as they could on the lustrous face of Hamblin.

The memorable meeting has left a deep and abiding impression on the minds of all the five of us who went to see Hamblin. His is indeed a great spiritual achievement. He is a light and guide to thousands of aspiring souls. He is old in years, but young in spirit. Such are indeed the inheritors of the divine kingdom of happiness and peace. They are the transmitters of the supreme gifts of the Spirit to those who hunger for them. To have their contact, or to read their words, means a precious gain to those who are on the God-ward path. When the world could produce more and more of such spiritual luminaries, we can be assured that a permanent state of peace and harmony in which war will have been completely banished would be within the range of possibility.

The Open Way

The "Open Way" is an Association established in London for teaching the common principles in all religions and philosophies, for relieving people of their mental and other sufferings. The objects of the Association are indeed laudable. It aims also at bringing about harmony and peace in the world. Ramdas received an invitation to address a meeting of the members of this Association. The Director, Dr. Graham Howe, welcomed Ramdas and the rest of us when we reached the place where the meeting was to be held. In a fairly big room were gathered about fifty to sixty members, of both sexes, of this Association. Ramdas chose to speak sitting on a table, in the Indian fashion. The subject of his speech was "Object of Devotion." Ramdas started the talk by describing the nature of devotion. He said:

The Positive Path

The nature of devotion, as described by one of the great saints of India, is "Supreme Love". If we have real devotion for God in our hearts, we shall be filled with that supreme love. Supreme love is by itself self-satisfying. There is no other spiritual discipline necessary to keep our mind away from the worldly pleasures than to saturate our minds with love of God. This is the positive path. This is what is called the Open Way. Because, when you have intense love for God, you remember Him constantly and attachment to all other things of the world naturally vanishes, just as when you bring light into a room, darkness automatically disappears.

Ramdas went on speaking almost without break dilating upon the various ways of approach to the Divine, but stressing mainly upon devotion and surrender. He observed:

Bring into your mind the greatness of God, and all your littleness will disappear. Think of Him as the almighty and your weakness will disappear. Think of Him as all bliss, and your miseries will disappear. Think of Him as supreme light, the darkness of your heart will disappear. This is the positive and real way of approach.

Continuing, Ramdas brought in experiences from his own spiritual career to emphasize and explain the various aspects of devotion. Speaking about the way of establishing world unity, he said:

Way to World Unity

The world is in a state of discord and dissension because it is not led by the Spirit. People have not gone deep down within themselves to find the true basis of unity in the world. They are groping on the surface and therefore cannot find unity. If they turn their minds inward they will find it. They are working only on the intellectual plane by which they expect they can achieve harmony. They cannot. Differences will remain as they are, and also discord, so long as unity is not based on spiritual foundations.

Ramdas was carried away by the subject which was so dear to his heart. He did not notice the passage of time. The assembled friends were also sitting still, absorbed in listening to him. Ramdas was in a state of spiritual exaltation. He must have carried the audience with him in this mood. When Ramdas exceeded the time-limit, Dr. Graham Howe reminded him of the same. As suggested by the Doctor, after the chanting of Ram-nam in chorus, the meeting broke up.

Visit to Sufi Saint

Soon after our arrival in London we came to know that the Sufi Saint Monsieur F. Schuon, whom we were expecting to meet, had arrived. A day was fixed for visiting him. One evening the friends of the Sufi Master came to take Ramdas to the building in which he resided. Ramdas felt supremely happy in anticipation of seeing this great soul. We climbed up the stairs and entered a room where we came face to face with him. He welcomed us, greeting with the words, "Salaam! Salaam!"

Whenever Ramdas had occasion to contact saints, to whatever religion, society or country they might belong, Ramdas used to feel a peculiar elation at heart and the meeting would fill him with rare delight and ecstasy. Such was his experience now when he met Monsieur Schuon. We sat near each other on sofas, while his disciples and members of our party sat on the carpeted floor. The saint was of a tall stature, with a fine short beard. He had a strong build. His face was bright with the light of inner illumination. He possessed a regal bearing which befitted him very well. But he was at heart so humble, simple and loving.

In the course of the conversation Ramdas talked on his favourite subject, the name of God. As he went on describing the glories of the Name, he noticed a strange glow litting up the face of the saint. He was occasionally nodding his head in full approval of whatever Ramdas said in praise of the Name. At times his face would be suffused with a happy smile. Some questions were put to Ramdas by his followers and he gave answers which added to the joy that filled the room.

Hindus at Heart

All the assembled devotees were the votaries of God's name. It was decided that we should sing the Name in chorus. First the Sufi friends chanted their Mantra for a while. Later Mataji, Lalita Devi, Kanchenben and others of our party sang Ram-nam together. It was evident that Monsieur Schuon had a very high regard for the Indian way of approach to God. That he had great reverence for saints, seers and mystics of other religions, especially towards such great souls as are honoured among the Hindus, was clear from what he said in the course of his talk, a part of which is given below:

"We all love very much the Hindu way of approach. But we are Sufis, as our Guru was a Sufi. At heart we are like Hindus—Hindus in the Sufi form. We like Sri Sankara, Ramanuja, Ramakrishna and all the Hindu saints. All my life I had hoped to know Hindu saints and do Satsang with them. But I could never meet a Hindu saint so far. We have been in Bombay, but for two days only. Now through God's will I have the joy to make contact with a Hindu saint. It is indeed a great pleasure for us.

"There are many ways of reaching God, to suit peoples of different temperaments. So, the forms may be different, but the inner side of spirituality is the same as one Truth alone is."

The scene of the meeting comes up before Ramdas' mental vision as he is writing this. The time spent with the saint did not belong to a plane which had anything to do with the world of change. Eternity was compressed, as it were, into that short period. The meeting closed and we dispersed. Of course, the parting was unique because we seemed to be getting away with the feeling that separation was false. Before leaving the building we went up to a room which was dedicated to the worship of Lord Buddha by one of His English devotees. We spent a few minutes in this serene and holy atmosphere.

Indian Students' Bureau

After leaving the Sufi saint we went to the Indian Students' Bureau as requested by an Indian student, Sri H. C. Vishweswarayya of Mysore, a young man full of devotion. He had arranged for a dinner to our party and his friends in the Bureau that evening. After dinner there was bhajan, sweetly sung by an Indian lady. Of course, most of the members who attended the meeting were Indians, with a sprinkling of Europeans. Vishweswarayya spoke first. His speech showed he was an ardent aspirant who desired to bring his friends into contact with Ramdas and afford them an opportunity to hear Ramdas' message. Ramdas talked to the assembled friends for about fifteen minutes on "How to lead a spiritual life in the work-a-day world." In the course of the speech he said:

The art of living in the Spirit

We are so much absorbed in the day-to-day activities of the world that we are ignoring the spiritual values of life. It is essential that we should not lose ourselves in such activities and forget the source from which our life has come. Unless we know that we are the supreme Spirit, we cannot be happy ourselves, nor make others happy. We believe we are what we appear to be, mere bodies. But there is the eternal Spirit in us of which we should be conscious, before we can so adjust our life as to attain true happiness and harmony in the world.

This art of living can be practised only when we turn our minds inward for some time at least during the twenty-four hours of the day and find that there is in us a Spirit that binds us all together in mutual fellowship and goodwill. The Spirit is the Truth that pervades everywhere, out of which this vast universal manifestation has emanated.

We had quite a blissful hour in the homely atmosphere of the Students' Bureau.

Next day Monsieur Schuon and his disciples paid a visit to Jayaram House where we resided. In the small sitting room we formed a crowded party; some sat on the carpet and others on sofas and chairs. The saint was kind and affable as usual. The love in his heart was manifest on his face in beaming smiles. Whenever Ramdas meets anyone who is a votary of the Divine Name, he usually speaks of the greatness and glory of the Name. Such a spontaneous outburst took place now when he was sitting before the Sufi saint whose sole prop and refuge was the name of God. The saint also spoke a few words about true devotion. When he and his party were leaving the house we spent a few minutes in the front garden wherein rose blossoms were in abundance. Manibhai Patel presented every one of us with a rose as a token of his love and regard for us. The tall and stately figure of the Sufi saint stood out in great prominence above us all—A very prince among saints. The picture is still vivid in Ramdas' mind.

Vedanta Centre, London

Whenever we found ourselves in any city or town where there was an Ashram, Math or Centre started in the name of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, we would consider it a great joy and privilege to pay a visit to it and have darshan and contact of the presiding Swamiji. Sri Ramakrishna has played a great part in moulding Ramdas' spiritual career. His inspiring talks and teachings have guided him on the path. So Ramdas cannot be sufficiently beholden to this spiritual luminary for all the grace and power which he showered on Ramdas.

In London the Ramakrishna Mission is running a Vedanta Centre. Over the telephone we contacted Swami Ghananandaji, its President, asking for permission to visit the Centre. The Swamiji not only accorded us a hearty welcome, but also invited us for our evening food. We reached the place at 5 o'clock and directly went up to the sanctuary. All the five of us and the two or three friends who accompanised us sat down in front of the huge picture of Sri Ramakrishna before whom lights and incense sticks were burning. We sang Ram-nam in chorus for some time. Swami Ghananandaji then took us to the dining room and treated us with all love to a simple but delicious meal, talking to us freely interspersed with wit and humour. We sat for a while in the spacious room of the Centre where lectures are delivered by the Swamiji. We took leave of the Swamiji feeling grateful for the love and affection he poured on us.

Shakespeare's Birthplace

According to a planned excursion, one morning we started in a car for a visit to Stratford-upon-Avon, where stood the house of the world famous English dramatist, William Shakespeare. From there we were to go to Matlock, a place in North England, where our friend Howard Williams lived. George Dudley drove the car which passed through various towns which gave us a picture of the lives of Englishmen, both poor and rich. On the way we saw the magnificent buildings of the Oxford University, the well-known seat of learning, resorted to by students from all over the world. Reaching Stratford-upon-Avon our car stopped in front of the house which was an object of great attraction, nay, reverence, to lovers of Shakespeare.

The readers need not be told about the greatness and world-wide fame of this wonderful poet-dramatist. Our earth has produced geniuses in various fields of knowledge—poetry, music, art, architecture, literature, science, and statecraft. All countries have presented to the world rare gems among human beings who have reached the zenith of aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual achievements. England for one should indeed be proud of having given birth to a son who is a veritable king among poets and dramatists. Shakespeare's dramas are masterpieces of English literature, not merely by their beauty of style and diction, but also by their representation of life in all its varied aspects and experiences. Shakespeare, if only we study his works looking to the spiritual side of life, as revealed in his writings, can be classed among those who had glimpses of universal vision. At one place he has, with the clarity and insight of a spiritual seer, said:

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players,
They have their exits and their entrances."

Ramdas was an ardent reader of English literature. And he had a great liking and admiration for Shakespeare and his works. His dramas held him under their spell. Ramdas went now to see the house of one for whom he had the highest regard. We entered the old building which we had seen in pictures. Ramdas felt that he was treading on sacred ground. We passed from room to room wherein Shakespeare walked, sat, wrote his famous plays and lived the life of an apparently ordinary play-wright. As Ramdas moved about seeing the relics of the articles used by Shakespeare, listening to the account of how this house was from time to time repaired and maintained, from the lips of a man who was explaining these matters to the visitors, he was transported to the days of the dramatist. Ramdas felt as if the poet was present there and he was having communion with him. Altogether the sight was very edifying and Ramdas' feelings were attuned to the atmosphere of the house. After purchasing some pictures of the house and some books relating to Shakespeare's life and works, we walked in the garden and looked at the house from different angles drinking in the spirit of the place. We then came out and got into the car which took us onward towards Matlock.

Spiritual Healing

Before we reached Matlock we halted at two places on the way. One was at Smisby in a small neat shed which stood in the midst of a garden in which flowers of various tints were grown. The place belonged to Mr. D. L. McSweeney and Mr. George A. Dudley. We were presented with beautiful bouquets by Mr. McSweeney and George's mother, Mrs. Marie Dudley.

George Dudley is a young man who was also a visitor to Jayaram House along with Caro. At the very first sight he fell in love with us and attached himself to our company. He talked very little, but he was quite absorbent and imbibed the truths inculcated by Ramdas in his discourses. Whenever we had to go out on visits either to London, or to distant places like Chichester and Matlock, he was the willing driver of the car which took us to these places. Though silent, he was all love and devotion. At the close of our visit to Matlock he expressed a wish to go to India to stay in our Ashram. Though at first Ramdas discouraged him, later on he agreed and now at the time of Ramdas' dictating these lines, he is with us in the Ashram. It was only a spiritual hunger that drew him to the Ashram from his home thousands of miles away.

From the flower garden, we went to the house of Mr. Stephen Sheppard, a friend of McSweeney in Burton-on-Trent. Here we met a number of friends who were interested in spirituality. McSweeney is a simple and frank person. In many ways he revealed the nature of the people of the country-side. He has a penchant for spiritual healing. He said that he had an idea of erecting a chapel on his land exclusively for developing through spiritual practices powers to heal the diseases of people.

In reply to a question put by McSweeney on spiritual healing, Ramdas categorically told the friends that it was no good striving for attaining powers to heal before one realized God in all His magnificence. First God and everything else came next. If we at all heal people of their ailments, we should do so as the accepted illumined instruments of God, whose power alone, we knew, worked through us. It was the touch of love that cured, enlightened and elevated another person. In this strain Ramdas discoursed before the friends. All the assembled devotees were very kind to us. Concluding he said:

Charge your Spiritual Battery

Your aim must be to realize God and feel your union with Him. Let healing not be the objective. Merely healing means, you stop your progress with that. If you do not conserve your spiritual power for attaining the goal and lose it in these practices, you will achieve nothing in the end. But if you keep your battery charged every day, you can march onward on the divine path. The battery is charged by continuous union with God. When you have seen God you can not only heal, but awaken people to the consciousness of God. Our central idea should be to keep our mind attuned with God. Let His power work through us in whatever way He wills. Your presence itself must be so dynamic that those who come near you must not only be healed of their physical ailments, but also be awakened to the consciousness of the Divine.

A Hurdle on the Path

In this connection Ramdas feels that he should say here some more words about spiritual healing. We hear sometimes so much of the spiritual or occult power wielded by persons who have spiritually advanced for healing purposes. By spiritual healing is meant curing a person of his or her physical diseases by use of this power. We see that so much importance is given to this kind of healing that the spiritual aspirants are in some places striving by disciplines and prayers to attain only these powers. This is undesirable. The whole object of treading the spiritual path should be only to realize God, to see Him, experience Him and feel His presence for all time. Instead of aspiring for this goal, if we go out of the way to cultivate special powers for curing diseases, we are really placing a big hurdle on our path to God. While we can, by our highest spiritual attainment, cure by our contact a man of the very disease of life, which is ignorance, by awakening him to the consciousness of his real divine nature, if we simply fritter away our energies, even when we are on the path, for curing the physical diseases of a person, we are doing a great mistake. When we have achieved God-realization, automatically God by His will and grace, will enable us to bring not only relief to the people who are diseased, but also bring them light and peace of the supreme Spirit. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and all else will be added unto you" is an illuminating teaching of Jesus.

Matlock

Leaving Burton-on-Trent we found ourselves speeding towards Matlock, which was reached at about 5 o'clock. We entered the beautiful house of Mr. Howard Williams and were greeted with warm welcome by his wife Betty. Here Ramdas spent most of his time in the library where several spiritually-minded people of the town came to see Ramdas and hear his talks. We had two meetings next day.

Mr. Williams is a great student of Vedanta. His small library contained books of religious interest. Williams' leaning is more towards the teachings of the Upanishads than towards other scriptures. What was noticeable in him was that he was tremendously earnest in his outlook and firm in his convictions on spiritual attainment. His first and last objective was to realize God and it appeared that he was struggling hard to get the fullest spiritual experience.

Mr. Williams' wife Betty and his little son, whom he has named Krishna, were also extremely happy over our being in their midst. Betty was all love and hospitality. She was also as earnest as her husband in her spiritual quest. Altogether, we spent our time in that blessed house most blissfully as we were in an atmosphere surcharged with love and devotion.

What is Vedanta?

Ramdas thinks it is proper to write here a few words on Vedanta and its application in the life of one who has realized Brahman, according to its teachings. The meaning of 'Vedanta' is the end of the Vedas. It marks the end of all material and scientific knowledge and the dawn of spiritual knowledge—the knowledge of Atman or God. The Upanishads are the repositories of this spiritual wisdom and the four great Mahavakyas embody the conclusions of the highest spiritual inquiry. The four Mahavakyas with their meanings are:

अहं ब्रह्मास्मि : I am Brahman.
तत्त्वमासि : That Thou art.
प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म : Brahman is Pure Knowledge.
अयमात्मा ब्रह्म : This Atma or Self is Brahman.

All these Vakyas point to the one Truth which is Brahman and declare there is nothing besides It. To realize Brahman is the sole aim of human life. The Taittiriya Upanishad defines Brahman by the words सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म — which mean Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, and Infinity. One who realizes Brahman enjoys perfect freedom and bliss. It is to be realized by the individual soul by divesting itself of its ignorance through the knowledge that it is Brahman. Here there is mystical fusion of the principal entities, namely, Soul, Universe and God.

Now a person who has realized this all-inclusive and all-transcendent Divine, lives in the world with the vision and experience that he is one with God and the universe. In Him there is no trace of the ego-sense and the desires born of ignorance. He becomes utterly Divine within and without, in all aspects of his being. He lives thereafter only for the welfare of humanity. His individual clingings and attachments are dead. As his vision is universalised, all his activities are the spontaneous offerings at the altar of humanity realized as Brahman.

A life lived in a narrow sense, confined to the interests of a family circle, or devoted to a particular kind of work that brings one any emolument or gain—a life wedded to the pleasures of the senses—is incompatible with the achievement of a radiant life, liberated from the bonds of Karma, in which nescience has been dispelled by the dawn of knowledge. The latter is the life of the man who has realized the truth of the Vedanta and such a one alone can be called a true Vedantin.

Merely reading books on Vedanta and getting oneself intellectually equipped with the ideas relating to this highest attainment cannot make one a Vedantin. Such a man can be compared to a donkey on whom is loaded cases containing ingots of gold. The donkey, no doubt, bears on its back the precious cargo, but does not know the value of it or have the joy consequent upon the use of it. Learning is both a help and a hindrance. Learning which goes only to swell the ego-sense, often making one pose as a person who has realized the Truth, can do more harm than good. God-realization means God-experience, an experience which enables one to enjoy divine bliss and peace in all moments of one's life. Verily, Vedanta converts an erring soul into the very manifestation of God.

After our two days' stay in Matlock we started on our return journey to Middlesex. On our way we dropped in at a hospital at Nottingham to see our friend W. A. Caro who had been admitted there for an operation. We spent with him a few minutes. He was in great pain, but his face showed perfect serenity. The nurse who attended on him was so good and kind to him. God's kindness comes to us when we are kind to our fellow-beings. Love attracts love and kindness attracts kindness. This is a law which has no exception. Caro found great happiness because we visited him. By evening we got back to Jayaram House.

Mr. W. A. Caro is the headmaster of a school in Nottingham, who came to know of us from his friend Williams. From the very first day of our arrival in London he was almost the whole day intimately associating with us. Although he was in great pain on account of some internal ailment, he was calm and collected and was most ardently listening to Ramdas' talks with the visitors who used to come to Jayaram House to meet him. As Caro expressed, he was peculiarly charmed with the Hindu way of looking upon the universe and all its movements as divine play. He was an earnest seeker of Truth and he seemed to have found the way to it. His open mind had readily received the teachings on the ultimate Reality as presented by Ramdas in his talk.

Before closing the account of our stay in England, Ramdas has to say a few words about our kind-hearted London host Manibhai V. Patel. Manibhai was introduced to us by Bansidhar G. Parekh, a friend who lives in Ahmedabad. He had invited us to his place by letter even before we started on the tour from the Ashram. As Ramdas has stated, he was not at home when we arrived in London, but in the hospital. After his return next evening from the hospital, he was still not quite well. However, he recovered within three or four days. Patel was a resident of Middlesex, as he told us, for over thirty years. He believed in the principles of the Christian faith, retaining at the same time his faith in Hinduism. He treated us, when we were with him, with great love, respect and kindness. He and his daughter, Lalitaben, were uniformly good to us, looking after our comforts in all manner of ways. We cannot forget the happy days we spent under the hospitable roof of Jayaram House.

At the time of our departure for the United States of America, Manibhai Patel bade us fare-well from the footpath in front of Jayaram House. His daughter Lalitaben, Williams, and Betty accompanied us to the airport, George driving the car as usual. The parting was a touching scene. The persons who were most agitated over the separation were Manibhai and Lalitaben. Both were visibly moved and stood looking at us with eyes moist as we left his place.

Some days after Ramdas wrote the above lines about Manibhai V. Patel, we received the sad news of his passing away. May his soul be blest with eternal peace!

CHAPTER X

NEW SPIRITUAL AWAKENING IN EUROPE

Ramdas feels it is necessary here to sum up in a few words his impressions about the new spiritual awakening evident in European countries. In Switzerland he saw that the groups represented by the Sufi saint and Jean Herbert stood for the unity of all religions. In Germany Dr. Gunter Zuhlsdorf of Frankfurt belongs to a renaissant religious society started to imbibe inspiration, light and guidance from all the great spiritual Masters of the world. K. O. Schmidt of Reutlingen, who is the Chairman of the German New Thought Movement and the district President of the International New Thought Alliance, disseminates the ideals of universal religion through his books and magazine *Neugeist*. Then we have Eduard Ullmann, another leader of the New Thought Alliance, carrying out the same ideals with great zeal in Munich. Again in France, the Centre founded by Swami Siddheswarananda has a universal outlook, befitting the Mission founded in the name of Sri Ramakrishna. Then again the Spiritual Development Centre started by Guy M. deGelder of The Hague, Holland, teaches that spirituality is a matter of soul development irrespective of the creed, colour and country to which the person may belong. In England we have Henry Thomas Hamblin as the leader of the New Thought. He is a dynamic spiritual force. He has contributed towards the liberalisation of the religious outlook by presenting the true Christian beliefs and principles which are perfectly in accord with the teachings of all sages, saints and teachers of the various religions. Hamblin, through his illuminating magazine *The Science of Thought Review* is bringing thousands of spiritual aspirants all over the world in contact with the Divine—the Divine who dwells in the hearts of all beings.

When we were in Reutlingen our friend Mr. K. O. Schmidt told us about the Quarterly *The Voice* edited in

England. He gave us also a copy of the journal. *The Voice* has international fame. It also stands for universal religion and brotherhood. It is sponsoring a world-wide spiritual movement, and has opened its columns for voicing the opinions and experiences of great saints and savants of the world, who hold out the goal of world harmony and peace. It claims a wide circulation as it is read in 43 countries of the world. Recently Ramdas had contact with its editor Mr. Joseph Busby, through correspondence.

The work of these spiritual leaders is helping humanity to achieve universal brotherhood and thereby create an atmosphere of goodwill and peace on the earth. The old edifice of dogmatic and bigoted religions, so called, is crumbling down as the heart of man seeks relief and freedom by transcending all the limitations set by a wrong understanding and practice of the teachings of the different religions. This is a happy augury of the times. True religion should unite man and man through the realization of the same indwelling universal Spirit or God, who is the all-loving and merciful Master of us all.

The Course of Human History: A Warning

Here Ramdas may also make a few observations on how human nature develops in a person, or in a group of persons, and how its impact on the environment causes either harmony or discord among the people round about them. If the development of human nature is in the right direction, it will create an atmosphere of harmony and peace. On the other hand, if the development is in the wrong direction, it will bring discord and war. History tells us how empires rose and empires fell. Great potentates and dictators, who attracted the world's attention to themselves through assumption of false pride and authority, perished.

The world seems to be like a chess-board on which persons who seek to wield power over others come and disappear like the chess-men. Nations by their toil and struggle come up to prominence only to kiss the dust when power and prosperity intoxicate them. Wherever there is power invested in human beings or nations by reason of their military strength, material wealth and prosperity, there they are prone to be affected by a spirit of fear and distrust of their neighbours. This attitude inevitably sets up a competitive and superiority complex by which they arrogate to themselves a false status. It must be admitted by all wise men in the world that such an individual or nation cannot be really free and happy within. True happiness is the outcome of the inner realization of freedom from the clutches of hate, desire and fear. This is true of all individuals and nations in the world who have achieved high material power, riches and prosperity.

For all rising nations of the world, the sages and saints who are blessed with wisdom have given the warning; that material advancement should be founded upon and controlled by spiritual principles and values. That alone will maintain the right relation and balance between the material and spiritual aspects of life and thereby convert the entire life into an expression of the Spirit. For, Spirit and matter are not two isolated entities, but one integral whole.

The above remarks should not be understood as having been made by Ramdas with regard to any particular country. It applies equally to all nations on the earth who are contributing towards the tense situation which we envisage at present in the affairs of mankind—a tension which spells a major catastrophe in the form of another world war. Above all the din and noise of the world, God's voice speaks through the sages and saints in unmistakable terms. They say that, however much militarists may try to bring about a global war and produce a state of chaos, His power will prevail. He who is seated in the hearts of all beings will not permit the horrible slaughter of human beings and the ruthless destruction of civilisation on an unimaginably vast scale which the use of nuclear weapons is bound to cause.

The critics may contend that the above statement cannot be justified in the light of past history. But it is not true always that history repeats itself. That evolution takes place in human nature is an admitted fact. A man who is of a violent nature does not ever remain so. When a higher consciousness dawns in him, he turns into a quiet and peaceful being. This is true not only of individuals but also of nations and humanity as a whole. Another fact which cannot be ignored in this connection is that man is essentially divine. God resides in the hearts of human beings and shapes history from within them. God is not an extraneous ruler or controller of the worlds. He is the very Soul of all life and existence. As Sri Krishna says to Arjuna in the Gita:

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।
भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥

> "The Lord seated in the hearts of every one turns the wheel of Maya, guiding the actions of all beings who are (as if) mounted on a machine."

So the will of humanity for establishing peace and harmony on the earth is nothing but the will of God. For, in humanity dwells God—nay, it is a veritable expression of God. A world war cannot, therefore, come when the enlightened will of mankind wants and works for peace.

When God inspires a human being or groups of human beings from within, He can and does bring about a complete transformation in human nature, which inevitably must influence the destiny of mankind. Nature is not static. It is moving, progressing towards a higher and more refined state, so that the latent divine light and power, standing for peace, unity and harmony, may be made manifest.

A time is certainly coming when human beings will realize the evil and futility of wars and live together, making illumined reason and pure love their sole guides in adjusting their affairs, instead of being impelled to violent action by selfishness, distrust, fear and hate.

God in man wills, one way or the other,—either the way of chaos or the way of harmony. Today mankind collectively aspires for harmony, and so harmony is bound to come. God's will at the present juncture works this way.

CHAPTER XI

U.S.A.—NEW YORK

Our next destination was New York. We left London airport and crossed the Atlantic Ocean. The time taken to cover the distance was about twenty-two hours as we had to touch Iceland and Labrador on the way. Both these places were intensely cold, but by God's grace we were able to bear it well. Indeed, God's power and protection was always with us and in all vicissitudes through which we passed, apparently happy or unhappy, we kept calm and cheerful. We were granted the necessary fortitude by Him through His infinite mercy. We reached New York on 6th October 1954.

America is a great country blessed with power and plenty. The people of the U.S.A., except the Negroes and Red Indians, are drawn from all races who colonised it coming from the various countries of Europe. After winning independence from the British Empire they have formed a Government based upon the three well-known principles of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity." They have raised a national monument—the Statue of Liberty —on Bedloe's Island in the Upper Bay. This memorial speaks for their love of freedom. Their hearts are generous in that they freely offer aid and relief to other countries in distress or in a backward condition. Their brains are ever active in inventing new machinery, technical contrivances and gadgets that cater to the amenities, comforts and luxuries of daily life.

America is a land which holds out a fascination to the people not only of Europe, but also of the Eastern countries like Japan, China and India. Ramdas cannot fail to mention here that America, true to her love of liberty, has played an important part in India's attainment of independence. She has also helped other nations in winning freedom. India looks to America with great admiration, for in material progress and achievements America stands second to none. But India, in so far as material prosperity is concerned, stands in most unhappy contrast. America, which is so powerful and in every way self-sufficient in material wealth is, however, looking up to India for her spiritual inspiration and sustenance.

Swami Vivekananda

This thirst for the wisdom of the Hindu revelation was first generated in the hearts of Americans by Swami Vivekananda when he conveyed to them the teachings of Vedanta about sixty years ago. He thundered out this message from the platform of the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago. The figure of Swami Vivekananda whose life was a complete dedication to God or universe, stood in his flaming Sannyasin robes, radiant with the light of God-realization, before thousands of delegates who came to the Parliament representing all the religions of the world. His voice that spoke then is still reverberating through time and we seem to catch even now the rumble of the enlightening message that he sought to convey to the heart of mankind. The western nations came to know the real import of the Hindu scriptures, especially of the Upanishads, from this great saint. He has left a deep impress on this world by his life and teachings. The effect of his great work is still visible in America which recognized first the spiritual eminence of this noted son of India. He, whose worth only a few could realize in India, was discovered and applauded by Americans as a rare gem among the saints and sages which India has produced, and held him forth before the wondering gaze of humanity. May eternal glory be to him!

At the New York airport we were received by Mrs. Gertrude deKock and two other friends. Gertrude deKock had occasion to visit our Ashram a few years ago and stay with us for some days. She was all kindness and help to us. We lodged in a hotel where we were provided with all conveniences.

Ramdas has seen great towns and cities. Among the cities that he visited in the course of the tour he found New York was unique with its sky-scrapers, vast wealth, heavy traffic throughout the day, and up-to-date amenities of life. The Empire State Building is the highest one in the world as it comprises 102 storeys. These tall buildings are so close to each other that the rooms inside have always to be lit with electric lights as otherwise they would be dark.

Mr. John B. Hayward is a disciple of Swami Omkar of Shanti Ashram, Waltair, India. Through the gracious recommendation of the Swamiji this New York friend arranged for our stay in a hotel, met us there and invited us first to his rooms. There was a gathering of select friends in his house among whom Mrs. Gertrude deKock was one. We met there some Indian friends also who had settled down in New York for a long time. Mrs. Hayward, a tall, handsome and elderly lady, welcomed us with all her heart and treated us with great kindness and hospitality. It was evident that both husband and wife were great admirers of Swami Omkar. The gathering was more or less a social party, the object being only to introduce Ramdas to a few friends of this devout couple. At the suggestion of Mrs. Hayward we had about five minutes' silent meditation. Mrs. Hayward is also a reputed artist and she took us round to show her paintings. The small group that had assembled there conversed with each other in perfect friendliness. This itself produced a most harmonious atmosphere.

Vedanta Centre

The next day, as arranged with Swami Pavitrananda, the President of the Vedanta Centre of Ramakrishna Mission, we paid a visit to the Centre. We [illegible] ed a hearty welcome by the Swamiji who was dressed in the western style. At the outset he explained to us how, for obvious reasons, he had to adopt this mode of dress. He was following this practice, he said, not with a happy feeling. There is no doubt that a true servant of God adapts himself to any mode of life which is found suitable and necessary for the carrying out of the Lord's service for which he has dedicated his life. What is important is not the dress but devotion in the heart for true and genuine service. We felt great delight in the Swamiji's company. He took us round to the shrine room first and then to the other parts of the huge building in which the Vedanta Centre was located. When we went to the shrine room we felt the place was pervaded with peace. We offered our respects to Sri Ramakrishna by laying at his shrine a bunch of flowers. It was evident, the Swamiji was leading a very busy life attending to the various activities of the Centre. We left the Centre, our hearts filled with joy.

A World-Calendar

Next we paid a visit to the house of a lady named Mrs. Elizabeth Achelis who was one of the party at Mr. Hayward's place. This lady is greatly interested in a movement for calendar reform which aims at introducing in all countries a standard world-calendar. She requested Ramdas to help her work by speaking or writing a few words in appreciation of her efforts in this direction. Then Ramdas spoke a few words.

He said that if by the introduction of a world-calendar, there was a possibility of promoting unity, peace and goodwill in the world, this move deserved every support and encouragement. This was true not only of this particular reform, but also of all movements in general. Ramdas was not interested in any researches into time and space for bringing about a reform based upon such researches. The one task for which he lived and moved from place to place was and is to instil into the hearts of people he met a keen aspiration for the eternal and infinite values of life. In the face of these values, to seek light in something belonging to the phenomenal life did not appeal to him. His main theme was the all-pervading God beyond time, space and causation. The aim of human life should only be to attain Him and live and move in the awareness of Him. Here time and space are transcended and one lives in eternity.

There is a saying in the Upanishads:

यस्मिन् विज्ञाते सर्वमिदं विज्ञातम्

"That by knowing which all this becomes known." In other words, when you have known the Atman, you have nothing more to know. So the purpose of our life should be to know the Atman.

Ramdas spoke in these terms and our kind hostess and the few friends present listened to him attentively. Soon a lady came and sat beside Ramdas and spoke about miracles or the acquisition of healing powers. Here again Ramdas told the lady that he was not interested in those subjects and so could not enlighten her. Then another friend put Ramdas the folowing question:

How to Feel God's Presence Always

Q: What do you say about the technique to feel the presence of God always?

Ramdas: You sit silently and strive to dissolve all thoughts. You may find it very difficult. Some thoughts come and go. So it is better to have one thought to the exclusion of all other thoughts. And after some time when you are in a position to keep only one thought in the mind, you must try to dissolve that also. When that thought is dissolved, your mind is perfectly calm and free from all thoughts. Sit silent and watch the mind. Know that names and forms have to be transcended. Accept the eternal Spirit dwelling within you. Then you will be able to realize the presence of God always.

The party had a delightful time during which the hostess was all solicitude.

Among the friends who were coming to see Ramdas in the hotel where he was staying a few may be mentioned here. Mr. Richard Miller, a disciple of Dilip Kumar Roy, was a frequent visitor. It was at Dilip's instance that he came to see Ramdas. Besides being a sincere spiritual aspirant he also possessed a rare poetic talent. He loved to be with us and so visited us twice on some days.

An Astonishing Proposal

Another visitor who was deeply interested in us was Dr. Alexander Imich. He is a scientist spiritually inclined. At the first meeting Dr. Imich said that New York was not at all a place where any spiritual work could either progress or achieve success because the people were too hardgrained and materialistic in their outlook to be interested in spiritual questions and were busy in the work-a-day world, pursuing the pleasures of life. He also observed that Ramdas' mission should be not only to give enlightenment to those who are already aspiring for God and are on the path, but also to convert the large number of nonbelievers and make them believe in the existence of God and put them on the path. Ramdas said that during his tour in Europe that also had become possible in a few cases. But the Doctor was not satisfied with one or two cases. He wanted mass uplift. He asked Ramdas if his books were meant only for aspirants to proceed on the path, or also for atheists.

Ramdas: "Some atheists who have read Ramdas' books especially 'In Quest of God' have turned to spiritual life, giving up their old ways."

Dr. Imich: "But the atheists, as a class, will never read your books. So you must do something to publish the book in such a way that even an atheist just picks it up and goes through its pages. He might think he has made a mistake in purchasing the book, but having purchased, he will, however, go through some pages and will be caught by it. That is how I feel."

Then he spoke about some of the great scientists whom he knew, who were as good as atheists. They had neither time nor inclination to think of the spiritual side of life. It was, he thought, scientists who should be converted first to religious life because if they came to believe in God, through them the whole world could be spiritually transformed.

Really, Dr. Imich was tremendously earnest and he meant well. His proposition was that Ramdas should stand before a great gathering of scientists and then by his miraculous powers, with a sweep of his hand, as it were, convert all of them at once into believers in God! The arrangements for a hall and the gathering of scientists, he said, would be done by him. After making the proposal Dr. Imich gazed at Ramdas intently for a few moments to find out the reaction on him of his astonishing suggestion.

Ramdas calmly told the Doctor that Ramdas did not come to America for making a spectacular show of spirituality. He would prefer to go along the path which was followed by the simple and humble saints of the world. Not that he was unwilling to meet and deliver discourses to a large number of people, but he would have such meetings attended by those who had real aspiration for God, those who were true seekers of Truth. Ramdas told him also that he did not believe in any mass transformation such as was thought of by him. That would cause only a momentary wave of enthusiasm about God, which would disappear as soon as they left the atmosphere in which they got this passing experience. In the end Dr. Imich agreed with Ramdas' view and expressed delight in having met him.

Assurance of No World War

Another day Dr. Imich and his wife came to see Ramdas at the hotel. In the course of the conversation there was a talk about the possibility of a world war over which the Doctor felt great concern. Ramdas assured him in no uncertain terms saying, "There will be no world war; surely there will be no war. You can watch it. What is the date today? Yes, the eleventh of October 1954, at, 2.30 p.m. Ramdas has made this statement 'No World War." Dr. Imich and his wife were both surprised and overjoyed at this most emphatic statement. Before leaving, the couple invited us to their quarters for our evening meal.

Accordingly, we went to their flat next day and spent a blissful hour with them. Both husband and wife vied with each other in their loving attention to us. After the meal was over Dr. Imich suggested that we should sit silent for some time in meditation. The lights were put out and we sat in the semi-darkness for a few minutes in silence. After meditation Dr. Imich switched on the television set. The scenes presented in it were not of a very edifying character. So it was soon switched off. While television is a novelty to people in the East, it is very common and popular in the West. From the way in which it is being abused now some westerners themselves have come to regard it as not very congenial for a life of harmony and peace in the home. Truly, it is proving to be a most distracting factor in the domestic life.

Science and Human Happiness

Science will be a blessing to humanity only if all modern scientific inventions are put to use solely for the material and spiritual advancement of man. Real happiness depends on a well-ordered society founded on moral and spiritual values. The radio, television and cinema which have gained a wide popularity all over the world, should not be used, as it is done, for catering to the lower passions of men and women. These inventions can easily be made mediums for disseminating through voice and pictures the right ideals for the achievement of world harmony and peace. Millions of people can be reached through them and taught how man can live with man in a brotherly spirit and how, with love playing a dominating part in human affairs, life can be freed from strifes and conflicts, and how everyone can contribute to the happiness of all human beings inhabiting this earth.

In the same way, to ensure the future of the world and civilisation, the new sources of tremendous power discovered by the latest developments in nuclear science should not be used for destructive purposes, but utilised solely for peaceful ends, such as securing sufficiency in food, clothing and other necessities of life in all parts of the world. Eminent international scientists including the late Prof. Einstein, have themselves issued a declaration recently containing a weighty warning against the catastrophic consequences to humanity as a whole of a world war in which atomic and other weapons of mass slaughter might be employed.

Thus the inescapable choice before humanity today is between mass destruction of the race and renunciation of war. Ramdas has already given in the earlier pages of this book clear expression to his conviction that the united will of mankind aspires for peace and happiness and that God who is residing in the hearts of all human beings will not allow them to court disaster and commit suicide through another world war.

Modern scientific advancement has also created for mankind many other problems of a minor character. One of them is the right use of the leisure that could be gained through the adoption of labour-saving appliances in agriculture, industry, house-building and other fields of work. The solution of all such questions centres round the unmistakable recognition of the supremacy of moral and spiritual values in life and the realization of the eternal verities as the *summum bonum* of human life. That is the only way how the world can be built up on the sure foundations of lasting peace and goodwill and how exploitation, discord and war can be banished once for all from the face of the earth. Verily, happiness can come to man only when all human initiative, skill and effort are harnessed and turned to account for the attainment of this sublime goal.

"If Ramdas had Two More Eyes......"

One day a lady visitor, Miss Rose Annenberg, offered to take us out for sight-seeing. She took us first to the St. John's Cathedral. Although its upper structure was not completed, the interior, the ailes, porches and the shrine exhibited the sculptural skill of the master builders. They also testified to the holiness of the heart which designed the imposing edifice clothing it at once with beauty and sanctity. We saw in the cathedral also various relics preserved in memory of Christian saints. The visit made a deep impression on our minds.

On the way Miss Rose Annenberg wanted Ramdas to see the many buildings on either side of the road. It was all too fast and hard for Ramdas to be turning his head right and left and right. He observed, "If Ramdas had two eyes at the back also, he could have seen the buildings on either side of the road without turning his head this way or that way." The lady simply laughed.

Another day we went to see a ten-storeyed building containing on all the floors a variety of goods for sale. This business emporium of MACY'S was so well organised that it can provide a person with whatever he wants. There were in it numerous departments of stores of every conceivable article of human use. It was a wonderful store. The brilliantly lit stalls with the hum of thousands of people going about for buying their requirements was a rare sight. God through His human forms can indeed produce marvellous things witnessing which He Himself is struck with awe and surprise! He is at once the doer and the witness.

There is in Cohasset, near Boston, a well-known spiritual institution called the Vedanta Centre, founded by Swami Paramananda, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda. Of this Ashram Srimati Gayatri Devi, a niece in early life of the late Swamiji, is the present President. At the suggestion of our friend Dr. Gunter Zuhlsdorf in Frankfurt, we had planned to pay a visit to this institution and have the Darshan of Gayatri Devi. But owing to Ramdas' slight indisposition the trip to Cohasset was cancelled. When we informed Gayatri Devi on the phone about the cancellation, she expressed a wish that we should not fail to visit their Ashram at Los Angeles. This we agreed to do.

"To Soften Impact of Materialism"

Dr. Paul Brunton is a well-known friend of ours. He had visited our Ashram many years ago when he was in India. He was now in California. He had however asked some of his friends in New York to meet Ramdas. One day two young men came into our room in the hotel and introduced themselves as Dr. Brunton's friends. Ramdas had a few minutes' talk with them. Soon after they left, the hotel waiter delivered a parcel in our room. It contained an air cushion and a pair of white soft-soled shoes with a note from these friends, with the interesting remark, "To help soften the impact of this materialistic country." Ramdas immediately put on those shoes. The soles were so soft that his feet sank into them and he could not help exclaiming, "Ramdas feels like dancing with these on."

CHAPTER XII

ST. PAUL

A Lover of Hindu Religion

After our stay in New York was over we flew to St. Paul in the State of Minnesota. At the airport we met Mr. J. R. Raymer Jr., his wife and Mr. David White. We went directly to Raymer's sweet little wooden house. We had our evening meal with them. It was a frugal vegetarian meal, our host too being a strict vegetarian. After meals we were taken round the house. In one room we saw that Mrs. Raymer had erected a handloom which she was fond of working as a favourite and useful hobby. Another main room was devoted entirely for meditation. On a raised platform were placed three or four framed photos. Raymer was a disciple of Swami Yogananda of widespread fame in America. In the centre was the picture of the Swamiji and on two sides the pictures of the Swamiji's Gurus. The atmosphere inside this room was pure and holy. The house looked in many respects like the home of a devoted Indian. Raymer had a staunch faith in the Indian way of spiritual discipline. He believed in renunciation of the world and the dedication of one's entire life to God. He was a lean, tall man possessing a simple and kindly nature. It was he who arranged for our stay in a hotel in St. Paul and also prepared for Ramdas the programme of meetings and interviews in the city.

Several meetings were held in different places—two in the Y.M.C.A., two in hotels, two in Raymer's own house and one in the Rotary Club. The first meeting took place in Raymer's house. Ramdas talked for about an hour, in the course of which he said:

Realise the Personal and the Impersonal

If you only depend upon the personal companionship of God, it is sure that you will have a sense of separation felt when you miss Him. If you experience only the impersonal Truth, you are likely to be disturbed while moving in the world. You have to realize the supreme God-head who is at once personal and impersonal. When you have realized this, you are established in absolute peace and bliss in whatever condition you are placed. Knowing your identity with Him, you remain separate from Him maintaining a close relationship as between child and mother, servant and master or friend and friend.

The meeting at the Y.M.C.A. was held in the room which was the venue of periodical meetings of the group of Swami Yogananda's devotees to which Raymer belonged. When Ramdas appeared in that room he saw the place was full of friends who were eager to hear him. For over half an hour Ramdas spoke and also gave answers to questions raised by some aspirants among them. In the course of the talk Ramdas said:

To see Good is to see God

If we are good the whole world is good for us. If we are bad, the whole world is bad for us. Every man has got some good points in him. We should see only the good points. If we are to see the bad points let us see them in ourselves. If we do so, we will find in course of time that what is bad in us will disappear. If we see evil in others and good in us, what good we have will disappear and the evil in us will grow. We are condemning, criticising and thinking ill of so many in the world. By doing so we are only making our mind more and more impure. So the way to progress is to see the good points in everybody and love everybody. Regarding the evil in us—ego-sense, desires and so on—we must repent and pray to God for their removal. To see good in others is to see God in them, because God alone is good. By seeing God in others we will realize God in our own heart. So long as we criticise others, we will never see God in them.

We say people dislike us. That is because we have no love for them. If we love them, their love automatically flows to us. When their love comes to us and our love goes to them, the two mingle together and create an ocean of joy. It is not bargaining. It is not a 'give and take'. It is only a spontaneous outflow of our love merging with the love of all beings founded on the oneness of the Spirit.

At the close of the meeting, friends crowded round Ramdas to have some words with him. Their happy faces showed that they felt spiritually elevated as a result of what they heard from Ramdas.

At the second meeting held in the same place Ramdas was asked:

Man has no Free-Will

Q: What is free-will and how does it stand in relationship with the divine will?

Ramdas: Really man has no free-will. There is only divine will working everywhere. It is a mistake to think that we, as individuals, have got any power to do anything. God is behind the inception, growth and destruction of all things. It is His one power that does all these things in the universe. If we submit to that power and know that it is active in us, we shall be free from the ego-sense, and realize that we are the infinite, immortal, all-pervading universal Spirit and Truth. To know that we are that Spirit is to live in God and this is spirituality.

The Dark Night of the Soul

Q: Having once experienced God, why should we have again the dark night of the soul?

Ramdas: This is true in the case of all spiritual aspirants and devotees of God. The experience spoken of by you is only a glimpse of the Divine and not the full experience from which there is no fall. Here what we need is grace to keep us always alert, to keep us above the dark waters of this world in which we are drowning every moment. God's grace alone can keep us above the temptations of the world. It is temptation that draws us down and then we fall into the dark night of the soul.

Swami Vivekananda's Disciples

Here at the Y.M.C.A., Ramdas met two very old ladies who, coming close to Ramdas, told him that they had seen Swami Vivekananda when he had come to America. They further said how they had invited the great Swamiji to their homes and had talks with him. When they were narrating about their contact with the Swamiji they were thrilled and their eyes were moist with tears of joy. It was really a good fortune to meet these devoted souls on whom the divine touch of Swami Vivekananda had left an abiding holy influence.

The other speeches in St. Paul were almost in the same strain, but on different subjects. They were delivered at the two hotels where rooms were engaged specially for the meetings. At one of these, the Curtis Hotel, Ramdas spoke on renunciation and made the following observation:

External Renunciation not Essential

It is not by mere external renunciation that we attain God. There are so many who have renounced the world and gone to the forests, but they have not realized Him. There are so many living in the world, doing their work sincerely dedicating it to God, who have found Him. It is not necessary that one should externally renounce everything. It is not the outer condition that matters so much as one's inner state of mind. What one feels within is what really matters. If we dedicate our life to Him and live in His light, then it does not matter where we live. We can live in the family and still have Him, because God is not only in caves and forests. He is in us, with us and everywhere about us. So to seek Him we need not go anywhere.

Pointing out the need for self-surrender to God, Ramdas said:

Go to God as a child

Our dependence on God must be absolute. It is not that we must purify ourselves first and then go to Him. He must purify us. We must go to Him like a child. A child goes in a dirty condition to the mother. The mother does not reject it, or ask it to come clean. She takes the child, washes and dresses it with clean clothes. God is more loving than an earthly mother.

The attendance at the Curtis Hotel was much bigger than at the Y.M.C.A. When addressing meetings of this nature Ramdas used to feel that he was merely a vehicle through whom the omnipotent power was pouring out the message of pure love, light and joy. Ramdas was invariably unaware of the passage of time, for he was so much absorbed in the talk. As usual, at the close of the meeting, the friends used to gather round Ramdas and exchange a few words with him individually in the most friendly spirit. It was all a free flow of love in the exuberance of which all those assembled bathed and played. Love breaks down all the barriers that separate man from man and brings about a fusion by raising the soul to a height in which there is perfect identity and oneness. At every moment of our life, where we are in tune with God, we come to feel that there is one all-pervading infinite ocean of existence and we are little waves or ripples on it. There is only one Consciousness, one Truth and one Reality.

Address to Rotarians

The Rotary Club is a well-known international organization, the membership of which is drawn from all classes of people of social standing and importance. Branches of this club are found in all countries of the world. They generally have a meeting every week when the members assemble together for social intercourse, lunch and speeches.

Raymer had arranged that Ramdas should speak to the Rotarians at one of their meetings on a Tuesday. We went to the huge hall in which the members had assembled. On a raised platform we took our seats. Ramdas was introduced to the Rotarians, of whom nearly 300 were present, by Mr. David White. In the course of his introduction he said: "Swami Ramdas is a lover of our own Heavenly Father. He serves his fellowmen as he sees God in them all. He is the founder of an Ashram in India which ministers to the real needs of the people. For him, love for God means service of man." Ramdas was the chief speaker of the day. When he was called upon to speak, he stood up and talked on Universal Love and Service. He poured out his heart to them in fifteen minutes. There was perfect silence among the audience. It was indeed a unique occasion for Ramdas to address such a representative gathering of intellectuals, businessmen and members of the learned professions like lawyers, doctors, and professors. He delivered to them the message for which he undertook the world tour. He stressed that love was the one dominating force that should enter our hearts, transform them and thereby establish a lasting unity founded upon the recognition of the one universal Spirit as the basis of the entire creation. He pointed out that we should not limit our aim to an international fellowship and unity on the intellectual or political plane. He also spoke on the need for rich people to share their wealth with those who were poor and suffering. Continuing he said:

Do not be possessed by things

In several parts of the world there is misery, want and starvation and it behoves those who are gifted with the power to acquire wealth to use it for the service of humanity. This is the noble ideal this organization has placed before you. Ramdas fully believes that by remembering God constantly, you will fulfil this ideal and by doing so raise yourselves to the highest peace and bliss, which is the sole quest of a human being.

Happiness comes not by merely possessing things, but by using them for the right purpose. It is truly said by a great saint of India, "You must possess things and not be possessed by them." Because, those things we possess are intended to be used not by ourselves alone, but also for the benefit of humanity. If we do it, our vision will expand until it reaches the Infinite and we shall be the most blissful beings. Bliss is the end and aim of this life. Real bliss you will have by this way and no other. So let your hearts be with God and your hands be working for the good of humanity.

You can make this possible only when you use some time, say five or ten minutes every day, exclusively for drawing your mind inward and communing with the Divine within you, and thereafter live a life in which you will spontaneously help and uplift those who are fallen and relieve those who are in poverty, pain and sorrow. Thus you can make your life sublime by filling it with the peace and bliss of the Eternal.

At the close of the meeting Ramdas was introduced to a few prominent friends in the gathering.

Another day Raymer took us to see some important churches. Among those we saw were some built in the old style and some in the new. In the churches we noticed that everything was provided for a calm and undisturbed atmosphere for reading the scriptures and praying. At the back of every chair before the rostrum there was a Bible tucked into a receptacle so that the church-goer, sitting on the choir behind it, could make use of the Bible during prayer. There were also loud-speakers, lights and other conveniences provided in the up-to-date style.

One evening we were taken by Raymer in his car for a long drive into the country. The rural scenes in America were not far different from those in India. But the American cities were built with such exact planning and design that very few towns in India can compare with them, or boast of such well-designed streets, buildings and traffic control. Raymer expressed his ambition to open a spiritual colony outside the city, and in the course of the drive he showed us a vast area of land belonging to him which he had set apart for starting such a colony. The drive was refreshing to us after being in the closed and stuffy atmosphere inside rooms and halls for long hours.

A Strange Manoeuvre

Before closing the account of our stay in St. Paul, Ramdas has to chronicle here a strange incident. One afternoon two Americans knocked at our door in the hotel room and entered. They seemed to have come to see Ramdas on an important mission. They were prompt in revealing the purpose of their visit as they were apparently in a hurry. They said that Sri Jawaharlal Nehru had resigned his premiership and was going to adopt a purely religious life. Ramdas was told that this news had come to them by wireless from India. They wished to know Ramdas' reaction to this news. They had come fully prepared with the equipments necessary to receive and broadcast whatever Ramdas might have to say on the reported resignation of Jawaharlal.

Ramdas told them that his mission to America was not to discuss about personalities or politics. He came to spread the message of Universal Love and Service. But the friends persisted that Ramdas should express his opinion on this important piece of news. Ramdas again told them that he was not concerned with this report and added that even if Nehru had resigned, the people of India, who idolised him, would persuade him to revoke his decision and continue as their Prime Minister. Ramdas further told them that Nehru was not such a religious-minded person as to take to a life completely isolated from national activities, even if he did not continue as the Prime Minister of India.

The two Americans still insisted upon Ramdas' giving a talk on this subject to be televised. Ramdas refused to have anything to do with this proposal of theirs. They left at last making the remark, "Whatever it be, we have brought you a fresh piece of news from India, which you have not heard of." Later it was found out that the news brought by these televisionists was entirely untrue. When Ramdas talked about this to an American friend, he said that it was all part of a political manoeuvre.

Preachers of Christ's Gospel

In the course of our stay in St. Paul two Protestant preachers came to see Ramdas in his room in the hotel. Their interview was brief. They came only to know Ramdas' point of view in regard to religion. Ramdas told them that he did not belong to any denominational religion and he believed in God who is the God of all peoples and countries of the world, the one Divine Father and Mother of the universe. The preachers concurred with Ramdas and remarked that God we all worshipped was indeed the universal Spirit. They expressed their joy in having met Ramdas, and left.

Mrs. Gertrude deKock was also in St. Paul when we were there. She stayed in the same hotel as ours. She attended all the lectures and talks of Ramdas. She was deeply interested in our humble mission of Divine Love and Service. A word about her is appropriate here. She is a follower of Jesus Christ and she has dedicated her life to the dissemination of the message of her great Master to all believers of God both in Europe and America. She is held in high veneration by those who have come into touch with her. One can find her always happy, cheerful, displaying very often a child-like humour. She has the knack of saying always the right thing at the right time. We understood that she was invited to many countries for delivering sermons in churches and at other spiritual associations. She has been able to turn the minds of many a sceptic towards God. She has written some books and pamphlets on various aspects of spiritual approach, which are simple, appealing and elevating. She uses plain, homely English in her talks and writings. She has a large fund of goodwill and love towards all whom she meets and moves with. God fulfils Himself through His prepared instruments in order to create faith in the hearts of people. One such instrument is Mrs. Gertrude deKock.

CHAPTER XIII

SEATTLE

After fulfilling our programme in St. Paul we left for Seattle in Washington State by plane. At the airport Mr. and Mrs. Groeger with two other friends were awaiting us. The flight over the snow-clad mountains across the vast expanse of the United States took more than seven hours. Our plane was late by two hours in reaching Seattle. This unexpected delay made our hosts Mr. and Mrs. Groeger somewhat restless. When Mrs. Groeger saw Ramdas coming down from the plane, her joy knew no bounds and she simply ran towards him shouting "Papa! Papa!" like a child greeting its father

She then introduced her husband and friends to Ramdas. We were accorded a very warm and loving welcome by them. We were taken to a hotel where we were comfortably lodged in one of the rooms in the eighth storey.

The programme for Ramdas in Seattle was drawn up by Mrs. Groeger. She had paid a visit to our Ashram some years ago. At her request Ramdas had given her the name Sarada. So in her intimate circles she is known as Sarada. Ramdas used to have correspondence with her after she left India and all her letters uniformly showed that she was full of devotion for God. Our going to Seattle was an event of unsurpassing joy and exultation to Sarada. She took it as a great privilege to present Ramdas to the people of Seattle and make them acquainted with him.

She arranged for several meetings—one in Eagelson Hall, two at the Chapel of the Church of the People and one in University Unitarian Church. In all the meetings which Ramdas addressed questions were also put to him on spiritual subjects. The introduction was done in most of the places by Sarada herself. As in other places, a select congregation was present at the meetings, the members of which evinced deep interest in spiritual development and attainment. In his speech at the Chapel of the Church of the People, Ramdas exhorted the gathering saying:

Human And Divine Love

Let us play the game of life in a straightforward and honest way. Let us do all things in a state of surrender to Him and give our life in complete dedication to Him, and be helpful to our fellow-beings. Service of humanity is service of God.

Outwardly we might say we love another. But physical love is no good. It is a source of misery, both to the lover and the beloved. But spiritual love based upon the feeling of oneness is sublime. It is a source of unalloyed bliss. You love another not because the other is a relation of yours, but because you and he are one in Spirit.

Speaking of the glory of spiritual love Ramdas struck a personal note and said:

Friends ask us how we felt in our journey, because we have come here after visiting quite a number of countries in

Europe and America. We have received everywhere great love. There is no reason at all for us to grumble. In all places friends have been very kind to us. If we have love in our hearts we get love in return, because God is everywhere and He is love. If a man sees God within himself, he sees God everywhere. If anyone says that he is God and not others, he has not known God at all, because that is not the right experience. If he has seen God within him, he must see everybody as the embodiment of God. His vision is so pure and glorious.

The Future of Mankind

At the end of the speech members of the audience asked Ramdas some questions of which one related to the future of mankind. In reply Ramdas gave expression to his deep faith as an optimist who always saw good ahead of him in everything. While many viewed the future with grave misgivings, Ramdas said that he was inspired by the sublime Vision of a world wherein all people loved one another, lived in perfect harmony and made a veritable heaven of this earth. So Ramdas impressed on the audience that humanity is marching to its glorious destiny by which all human beings will be spiritually illumined souls. This faith was grounded on the truth that the world was controlled by God who was so good and merciful that He will bring about this most desirable consummation.

In the Hindu terminology there is a word "Jijnasu" which means "He who desires to know about the Truth." The questioners Ramdas met in Europe and America were of this type. They were genuine seekers of Truth who were eager to know the ways and means of achieving It. Some of those who attended the discourses used to meet him at the hotel to better understand certain points on which Ramdas spoke at the meetings.

Transmission of Spiritual Power

Among the visitors we had in Seattle Ramdas may make particular mention of two, Yogacharya Mildred Hamilton and Mr. Robert Carr. Reverend Ralph B. Hamilton and his wife Yogacharya Mildred Hamilton are ardent disciples of Swami Yogananda. Mildred Hamilton would be in a state of divine inebriation when the thought of God came into her mind. She is also a great lover of saints. She came one early morning before any other friends arrived to meet Ramdas. She said that in Ramdas' presence she felt elevated into the divine consciousness. She squatted on the carpet and with eyes closed remained for about ten minutes absolutely still, her face lit up with a spiritual glow.

Next evening Ramdas was taken to their house to meet their friends—devotees of Swami Yogananda. The meeting lasted for an hour. Here Ramdas was asked to speak a few words to the friends. Ramdas addressed the gathering on the greatness of saints and the ways in which they influence spiritual aspirants who seek their help. In the course of his speech Ramdas said:

How an aspirant is transformed

It is said that saints transmit their powers in three ways—by thought, sight and touch. When a saint thinks of a person, even though he is far away, that person is illumined. A saint looks at a person and he feels by the saint's grace that his entire being is shaken to its very foundation and he finds himself transformed from that moment. A new consciousness dawns in him by the saint's very look. If a saint places his hand on the head of an aspirant, that instant the aspirant will feel tremendous change taking place in him.

Hearing these words Mildred Hamilton requested Ramdas, after he closed the speech, to touch the head of everyone present there and transmit his grace to them in that way. Ramdas agreed to do so saying, "Yes. Ramdas has committed himself!" The devotees present then bowed before Ramdas one by one and he placed his hand on their heads.

After this was done, Ramdas told Mildred Hamilton, "You have got here all your fragrant flowers together. Are you all happy now? You must, of course, feel happy." With her characteristic humility she replied, "When God Himself has come to us, why should we not feel happy?" At this Ramdas remarked, "God has come to see God." It was indeed a very blissful gathering.

"Don't Loiter on Lower Planes"

The other visitor Ramdas referred to, Mr. Robert Carr, is the founder of the Truth Research Institution in Portland. He heard about Ramdas' arrival in Seattle and came all the way from there to see him. He was deeply impressed by Ramdas at his very first meeting. Thereafter he used to come often to the hotel to see Ramdas. From his conversation Ramdas made out that he was something like a medium through whom departed holy spirits were speaking. He used to get also supernatural visions. He was in his own way guiding others to obtain such visions and experiences. He was running his institution regularly for carrying on this kind of work.

In the course of his talks Ramdas definitely discouraged him from having recourse to these visions of spirits and seances which belonged only to the mental plane and the world of phenomena. Ramdas also advised him that he should strive to go beyond these planes into that superconsciousness in which he could feel one with the Divine, and realise God's omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience. To loiter on the lower planes making much of that and seek to guide others was, Ramdas pointed out, a mistake., Ramdas also gave him at his request the Ram Mantra. Later, Ramdas came to know from him that he had changed his aim and that of the institution from one of acquiring mere knowledge of psychic phenomena to an aspiration for the attainment and realisation of the supreme goal of life — God.

Talk with Indian Students

In respone to an invitation from the Indian students in Seattle we went to the University to see them. They formed a small gathering in a room where Ramdas gave them a brief discourse. In the course of the talks that followed some of the students put Ramdas the following questions:

If everyone follows you?

Q. Do you think Americans are less happy because they lack spiritual advancement?

Ramdas: Those who are thinking of God alone are always happy. In that sense Americans are less happy. Even in India those who do not think of God are not happy, even though they may be very rich and prosperous.

Q: If everybody follows your teaching, everybody will have to be wandering like you. Is it not?

Ramdas: Not necessarily. Ramdas is wandering round the world only to tell you all about the secret of eternal happiness and bliss. You can lead the real life and be happy wherever you are and in whatever profession you may be engaged.

Q: What will be the world like when everybody is happy?

Ramdas: Like the kingdom of God. That is what we really want. There will then be nothing but happiness everywhere. Everybody will have shed his selfishness and will work for the good of others, contributing what he has for the welfare of all, instead of each one working and toiling for his own sake.

Vedanta Centre

Another visit we paid in Seattle was to the Vedanta Centre belonging to the Ramakrishna Mission, where we had the Darshan of Swami Vividishananda who has been working here for over thirty years. The Swamiji was very kind to us and took us round to the shrine room and other parts of the Centre. He was also good enough to give Ramdas the benefit of his Darshan again the same evening at the meeting in the Chapel of the Church of the People.

Science and Spiritual Values

Another day we were taken on a visit to the Heisdorf & Nelson Farm and the Carnation Farm where we saw the remarkable achievements of science in raising the finest breeds of chickens and cows. America is indeed far in advance of other countries in its work of producing the finest animals and other fauna which contribute towards the economic uplift of the country. In America science has done wonders. All the forces of nature have been harnessed there for the material prosperity of the people. But, after all, material prosperity is not the whole thing. We should have, no doubt, plenty of things for our creature comforts and necessities, but the things of the Spirit are of greater value and so should not be ignored.

On our arrival in Seattle, when we were driving from the airport towards the hotel, where we were to stay, we had to pass by a series of long buildings in which, we were told, jet planes, mainly bombers, were manufactured on a rapid and extensive scale. Man is busy constructing new contrivances for his enjoyment and conveniences on one side, and, on the other, equally busy in using his intellectual powers for inventing horrible machines for the wholesale destruction of cities and human lives in millions. We are here reminded of the three functions of God—the creative, protective and destructive. Verily, it is His one power that controls all the activities of the world. God's play is really wonderful. We can but simply witness it and unquestioningly submit to His will.

America is trying to combine material achievement with spiritual evolution. It will indeed be a great day when America, nay the whole world, is spiritualised in its outlook so that people can live together as brothers and sisters, having enough to eat and clothe, suitable houses to live in and plently of work to do. Such a heaven on earth can become possible only when the Universal Spirit that resides in the hearts of us all becomes our sole inspirer and guide.

There are some pleasant items to be mentioned here before Ramdas closes the account of our stay in Seattle. We were invited for lunch one day by Mr. Groeger at his neat, bright and well-ordered wooden house. The cooking was done by Mrs. Groeger and Rani Lalita Devi. We formed a small party at lunch. We had a delightful time. We were overwhelmed by the great love which Mr. and Mrs. Groeger poured on us. This speaks much for the hospitable nature of the Americans. When we meet together with pure love in our hearts, we transcend all physical limitations, and merge our souls in the universal Consciousness. Even when two realise their oneness in Spirit, the vibrations caused thereby will set up a wave of peace and goodwill in the cosmic life.

As Ramdas has already mentioned, we were staying on the eighth storey of the hotel in Seattle. In the nights when we looked out of the windows, we were presented with a sight which was most bewitching. We could behold the extensive city of Seattle illumined with thousands of coloured lights. The scene was highly picturesque. Here was seen the handiwork of man whose genius for creating marvellous things is equal to that of the Creator, for the matter of that, Creator Himself is the prime force that makes the intellect and hands of man think and act. Seattle is not a city of high buildings. Most of the houses were single tenements with roofs almost uniform in shape and style.

Love Melts the Pragmatic Man

When the time for our departure from Seattle came we were taken by Mr. Groeger in his car to the airport .As Ramdas got into the car and sat beside Mr. Groeger, with a flushed face and husky voice he told Ramdas, "It is said that it is perfectly foolish and silly for a man to cry on any occasion. I too firmly hold on to this view, but strangely, when I am about to be separated from you, the very thought agitates me and I cannot help the tears in my eyes." As he said this, two large pearly drops fluttered in his eyes. The next moment he rubbed them off and drove the car in silence.

Mr. Groeger is an intensely practical man whom no one will take to be emotional in his temperament. He believes in hard work. Such a man was moved to tears when we were parting from him leaving Seattle. It shows how when love, the sweetest of emotions, enters the heart, the soul melts and even the most pragmatic man is at once transformed into a tender and ardent votary of Love.

Mildred Hamilton who has a heart filled with divine light, which is reflected on her face, was also present at the airport to see us off. Mrs. Groeger had gone in advance by car to San Francisco, our next destination, for meeting us there.

CHAPTER XIV

SAN FRANCISCO

"Is it all a Dream?"

In the evening after flying for four hours, we reached San Francisco and were taken directly to the building of the American Academy of Asian Studies by Mr. William Swartley, the House Manager of the Academy who had come to receive us at the airport. We got upstairs and came in front of the door of a room in which Dr. Frederic Spiegelberg was giving lessons to some of his students in Sanskrit. As soon as he saw Ramdas, he came out, gave Ramdas a warm embrace and standing before him with eyes wide open exclaimed, "Swamiji, are you really here, or is it all a dream?" For a moment he stood still gazing intently on Ramdas, his heart overflowing with love and his face suffused with a happy smile. He took Ramdas for a minute inside his classroom and introduced him to his students.

San Francisco is a big and beautiful city. We had heard much about it in India. The Universities in California attract many Indian students who wish to go in for post-graduate studies. The climate of San Francisco is similar to that of India and quite suitable for Indians to live in.

American Academy of Asian Studies

The American Academy of Asian Studies, founded in 1951, is a well-known institution which offers American students facilities for the advanced study of Asian religions, cultures, philosophies, languages, arts and socio-economic problems. There are several faculties in which students are coached up by proficient teachers qualified in different branches of Asian thought and culture. Mr. Alan Watts is the Dean of the Academy. Dr. Frederic Spiegelberg who is a Professor in the Stanford University is also a visiting Professor of Indic Studies in the Academy.

Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri is another principal Professor of Indian Philosophy in this institution. We were invited by Alan Watts at the instance of Dr. Spiegelberg to stay with them during our visit to San Francisco. According to the programme drawn up by the Academy, two meetings were arranged here for Ramdas' talks, which they call by the name 'colloquium.'

The Stanford University

On the next day after our arrival we were taken to Stanford University about 35 miles away. It is a big institution having about 7,500 students on its rolls. Here as already mentioned, Dr. Spiegelberg is the Professor of Indian Thought. Dr. Spiegelberg took us round this large educational colony. We were taken first to the University Memorial Church. The face wall of the church has got on it beautiful paintings symbolising Jesus Christ preaching, surrounded by his followers. We got inside the building and saw the well-arranged seats, the artistic decorations and carvings befitting the house of God. From the church we went to the University library. Ramdas was told by Dr. Spiegelberg that the total number of books in the library was two million. They were arranged on open racks in a systematic and orderly manner. This phenomenally large number of books occupied several storeys of the building. Books on every conceivable subject and langauge from all parts of the world were collected and placed here. We can imagine how much literature has poured out from the prolific brain of man. The human brain is a marvellous workshop. Here man is busy in expressing himself in various ways, of which thought revealed in words forms the most precious product. The dominant creative principle in the human being finds free play when it blossoms out into a panoramic unfolding of the Spirit for the sheer joy and ecstasy which it yields.

Dr. Spiegelberg arranged two meetings for the benefit of the students of his Indian civilization classes, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. The class rooms which were fairly large were full on both occasions. The strength in each class was about one hundred. Ramdas took a chair in front of the students and Dr. Spiegelberg sat by his side. Here Ramdas was not asked to deliver any discourse or speech on any philosophical or religious subject, but he was only to answer questions put to him by the students. From the questions it was evident that the students were very keen on understanding the subtleties of Indian philosophy and other problems relating to Hinduism and Buddhism. Like pigeons from their holes, questions after questions flew across the room towards Ramdas from the informed minds of the students. Ramdas gave them answers as inspired by God and each answer evoked a hearty approval from the students, oftentimes tickling them to laughter. Ramdas may give here a few typical questions and answers in order to apprise the reader of the great desire of the American students to know India, its religion and philosophy. The two hours spent with these young friends were most delightful and entertaining.

Two Kinds of Smile

Q: We are living in a country which says "Keep smiling". It does not produce any inward result or value. So we have become somehow critical of all artifical efforts to keep smiling.

Ramdas: There are two kinds of smile, the genuine and the artificial. Very often we put on smiles, but the heart does not smile, only the lips and face take part in it. This is not real smile. When the heart is filled with joy, it is reflected on the face as a smile. It is a natural outflow of joy and such a smile is genuine and very healing. If you give such a smile to a man who is full of sorrow, it will be powerful enough to release him from that sorrow.

Q: How do you find India's awakening to technology affecting her spiritual life?

Ramdas: It should not affect. We must progress materially and spiritually, side by side. That is the true development we expect will take place in India and all over the world. Material progress should not be at the expense of spiritual advancement. They must go hand in hand. Then we will have the integral evolution.

Faith or Grace First?

Q: Does one believe in God by his own will, or by the will of God?

Ramdas: That is a question which has arisen in the hearts of millions and millions. To have faith in God, His Grace must come to us first. Faith first, or grace first? It has been conclusively proved by saints, who have had the highest spiritual experience, that Grace stands first. The devotee says, "Oh God. I remember You because You remembered me first." Without His Grace our mind will not turn towards Him.

Q: What does Ramdas think of Christian missionaries going to India?

Ramdas: That is carrying coals to Newcastle!

Q: Would love not illumine spiritual struggle?

Ramdas: Love is the end of the struggle. When you have got love, your struggle ceases. The struggle is to get rid of the ego which obstructs our getting the Love that is our aim. Just as you churn curds until you get butter, you have to struggle only till you get Love.

Q: Do you consider yourself and your body as one?

Ramdas: The body is the expression of the Spirit, the indwelling Spirit. It is the same with you also. You are the expression of the indwelling, all-pervading Spirit. So also others.

Q: Do you consider your global tour a successful one?

Ramdas: Success or failure is not Ramdas' concern. God has sent him on this tour and he is doing God's work everywhere and God alone knows how far he has been successful. He does not mind what people say about it. Some may say it is a success, while others may say it is a failure. Whatever they say is all the same to Ramdas. He is doing the work which God has entrusted him with, which is to spread the ideal of universal love and service. He has gone over several countries in Europe and then has come to America. He stayed for a few days in New York, St. Paul and Seattle before he came here. Wherever he went he met with nothing but love and kindness. He sees friends everywhere and no strangers anywhere in the world. All are our friends when God is our friend. So Ramdas meets friends everywhere and he talks to them about God and they are all happy to hear him. He has come to you also to talk about God, because God is his master, friend and all in all; as such he has no other topic to talk about than God. In that way, considering the loving attention and kind care he received from friends and the various talks he had given to them about God, the tour may be taken to be very successful.

Q: Do you ever feel sorry for the suffering of other people?

Ramdas: Ramdas surely feels for their suffering. But he knows the suffering is due to their ignorance.

"Ramdas will Dance with Joy"

Q: What will Ramdas do if I take away his shoes and glasses and throw them out of the window?

Ramdas: Ramdas will dance with joy. You may do so. It is Ram who has given them. If Ram in one form takes away, He will give in another form. Some years ago, Ram came one night and took away all things from Ramdas. Ramdas was happy to give Him everything. He had only one loin cloth left. By morning, next day, all things were again provided to him anew by Ram in another form. So the giver is He and the taker is also He. If you throw away these things, Ram will come in another form and replace them.

Q: Is it possible for a person of any caste to be one with God?

Ramdas: God has no caste. The castes and creeds are all of our own making. We have manufactured them, so to say. God never made such distinctions. He assures us that if we have sincere love for Him in our hearts, He becomes ours.

Q: Did you have to give up your family to gain perfection?

Ramdas: Ramdas was taken away from the family for a short period, but he returned to them soon and thereafter he truly loved them. Before that, his love for them was not genuine. It was personal and selfish.

God Never Punishes

Q: Does God punish?

Ramdas: God never punishes. Punishment is always self-inflicted and is there only because of our bad actions, for which we have to suffer. We commit wrongs when we forget God and we have to suffer for them. When we remember Him, we act wisely and do not have to suffer. So we are punished by our evil actions.

In between these two meetings, at about 12.30 noon, Dr. Spiegelberg conducted us to a huge building where we were to take our lunch. Of course, everywhere in Europe and America we found meat-eating very common. Rarely we met people who were strict vegetarians. However, as we had informed Dr. Spiegelberg beforehand about the nature of the food we take, we were provided with vegetarian meal. Then Dr. Spiegelberg took us to the Hoover Tower erected by one of the Presidents of the United States bearing this name, to deposit the precious articles saved from destruction in Germany during the last world war. We were taken up in the lift to the top of the Tower. From this height we could witness the vast and extensive country all round. One remarkable sight we saw was the innumerable motor cars of varied colours parked on the University grounds, forming an attractive design. We learnt that the cars belonged to the students of the University whose total number was about 7,500.

Colloquium at the Academy

The two meetings held at the Academy were attended by learned professors and students and keen spiritual aspirants consisting of young and elderly folk. They were significant because during the colloquium that took place on these occasions there was a wonderful intellectual rapier play, as it were, between the members of the audience and Ramdas. The former was made up of people tremendously earnest whose sole object seemed to be to derive from their contact with Ramdas as much spiritual inspiration and benefit as they could. The questions put to Ramdas were not idle ones. They touched the deepest problems of life. Some women among them, who must have been doing Sadhana and struggling hard on the spiritual path, came forward prominently to have their doubts and difficulties cleared.

On either side of Ramdas on the forum were seated Dr. Spiegelberg and Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri at the first meeting, and Dr. Spiegelberg and Mr. Alan Watts at the second meeting. They started the talk by putting a question or two and thus set the ball rolling. The faces of the friends seated in front of Ramdas were bright with anticipation, their eyes centred on him. Truly, as in other meetings, so in these meetings too one could feel intensely the presence of the Divine. The atmosphere of the room was pervaded by a peculiarly elevating influence. After all, Ramdas is a child of God, and He in His wisdom had taken him to such a distant place on the other side of the globe to meet friends who were wishing for a long time to contact him. Before he made his appearance in their midst, Ramdas was already known to the friends in San Francisco through the lectures delivered by Dr. Spiegelberg about Ramdas and also by their reading Ramdas' works and the Ashram magazine *The Vision*.

The following are some of the questions and answers at the colloquium:

God Never Interferes

Q: In what point of Yoga did you find the hand of God interfering?

Ramdas: God does not interfere. He took Ramdas by hand and Ramdas allowed himself to be taken. If we surrender ourselves to Him and are guided by Him, everything will go all right. But what we do is that we try to escape from Him and do not permit Him to take hold of us. That is the difficulty with us.

Q: What was the obstacle that came on the way and which proved to be most helpful to Ramdas?

Ramdas: All the obstacles that came on the way were helpful. Hundreds of so-called obstacles came and they all proved to be beneficial because Ramdas never took them to be obstacles. In fact, they were not obstacles at all. They were only the things necessary for his progress. It all depends upon how we look at them.

Q: Is it not possible to have a perfect state of meditation lying on the bed?

Ramdas: Sometimes by trying to meditate lying on the bed we go to sleep.

God and Man are One

Q: God and man should be working together, or is it God alone? There is a saying that God and the farmer must work together.

Ramdas: Ramdas would have it this way. The farmer must work feeling one with God. In Ramdas' eyes the farmer is God Himself working as farmer. God and farmer are not different.

Q: When you started on your journey towards God, did you feel that you would not turn back?

Ramdas: Ramdas had given himself over to God to such an extent that He took him by His hand and led him on. If Ramdas had been thinking that he was going by his own strength, perhaps he would have returned. But he was all along in God's keeping. Therefore there was no question of his turning back.

Q: Would you tell us how much time was used for your prayers during the first three years of your intense struggle?

Ramdas: His struggle was to keep God-thought for all the 24 hours without break. He gave up sleep in those days as he was afraid by going to sleep he might forget God. He reduced his food to the minimum so that he would not be overcome by laziness and sleep. He adjusted his conduct of life in such a way that a stream of God-thought ran in his mind unbroken. He wanted to love God and God alone.

Q: Ramdas should not say 'we' are unhappy. Ramdas should say only 'you' are unhappy.

Ramdas: Ramdas does not see any distinction between you and we. You and we are not different.

The Better Way

Q: Is it true that if somebody is lost in some vice, the best way to save him is to permit that vice as the basis of Yoga?

Ramdas: That means if his vice is drinking, you should supply him with bottles after bottles. Ramdas does not approve of this method. So far as Ramdas is concerned, the other way seems to be the better. By love you can wean him away.

Q: What would you say to the western critics who ask why you have not got the power of healing the suffering of humanity?

Ramdas: Even if Ramdas removed the sufferings, sufferings will not cease; they will come again to afflict mankind. If people, however, realise the great Truth, God, they will be free from sufferings for all time and will attain eternal freedom.

When Love Enters the Heart

Mrs. Groeger, alias Sarada, from Seattle arrived in San Francisco and met us at the Academy along with her daughter Miss Rosemarie. She was drawn towards us irresistibly. In our company she behaved like a little girl, full of joy and enthusiasm. When divine love enters our heart, we are changed beings. We are intoxicated with a rare joy. Then we look, act and generally behave in a manner which will be a matter for adverse comment from people who do not understand us.

One day we were taken by Mr. James Wardlaw in his car for a drive. James is a plain, devout and unsophisticated person, holding a job in the fire brigade. We went to a garden which was laid out with all the structures in the Japanese style including the gateway, particularly the carved and nose-up eaves of the roofs. In the garden the air was peaceful and we saw in our walks many works of Japanese architecture, principally a huge well-sculptured image of Buddha. We stood before the image for a few minutes in a reverent attitude bringing into our minds the Lord's sublime life and teachings which have revolutionised the lives of millions of people in the eastern hemisphere and also partly in the western. Really, this Japanese garden was a beauty spot so far as natural scenery was concerned. In the course of this drive we saw on the roadside a fine marble bust of Beethoven, the famous European composer of soul-enchanting music.

Then James Wardlaw took us for sight-seeing towards the hilly tracts on the off side of California. His object in taking us to see these places was mainly to have us all for himself as he liked our company. Ramdas sat by his side in the car while he was driving it. James is a great admirer of Sri Ramakrishna and a frequent visitor to the local Vedanta Centre of which Sri Swami Asokananda is the President. We liked James' simplicity and frankness very much. Another day he brought his wife and introduced her to us. The couple are of a devotional nature.

In fact, there was nothing rare in the sights we saw during the motor drive. One thing we noticed here, which we did in other parts also of the U.S.A., was that the life lived in this city was marked by discipline and regularity. The people were very industrious. There was no sign of want anywhere. Each one had some work or employment. They lived in nice and comfortable houses. They had enough to eat and clothe. Here again Ramdas was reminded of the contrast in the conditions in India which is far, far behind in the economic self-sufficiency.

Another day, as desired by Mr. Louis Gainsborough, the Chairman of the Academy, Ramdas gave him a private interview for about half an hour. In the course of our conversation, he explained the great ideals for which the Academy stood. Its aim was to find out a basis for the cultural and philosophical unity of all nations through the study of the writings of the great thinkers of these nations. Special attention was paid to works which gave expression to their sentiments, ideologies, cultural and literary achievements and above all to their philosophical outlook based upon religious belief and experience. The work they sought to accomplish was indeed laudable. This friend wanted to prolong the interview. But Ramdas could not remain with him longer as he had some other engagement at the time.

Mr. David W. Hunter is a good-natured young man who was introduced to us by Dr. Spiegelberg at San Francisco. He is a teacher of theatre music. He looked upon us with great affection. He took us in his car to the Stanford University and also invited us to his bachelor quarters. He is a devout spiritual aspirant and a pure vegetarian. He used to meet us at the Academy of Asian Studies. We felt great joy in having come in contact with him.

Fellowship Church

Among the visits Ramdas paid to important places, the one that stands out significantly was his visit to the Chapel of the Fellowship Church. This is a church where people of all classes and denomination can freely attend the services. The leader of this church is a Negro. Many other devoted Negroes as also Whites are its members. We were taken inside, as we got down from the car, by the leader who was waiting for us and Ramdas found himself in a big hall in which, as he entered, he saw a decorated shrine with the insignia and flags, which were the symbols of unity and harmony of all races of the world. Ramdas sat in the chair offered to him. This time only three of our party attended the meeting—Satchidananda, Sagarlal and Ramdas. We received a warm welcome from the congregation.

Ramdas spoke here on Universal Love and Service for over half an hour, predominantly stressing the need of unity among all members of the human race without regard to colour, creed or other man-made distinctions and divisions. The talk appealed to the congregation very much. They then put some questions which were answered by Ramdas in the light of his own spiritual experience.

Q: How does one pray?

Ramdas: The prayer should be a simple one, in one's own language. We need not borrow another's language for our prayer. We can pray to God to give us constant communion with Him and ultimately reveal His presence in us and everywhere about us. This is a simple prayer.

If Ramdas is attacked?

Q: If a man rises up and threatens Ramdas' life, what course of action will Ramdas take?

Ramdas: Ramdas will never lift his little finger to take anybody's life, even if he is attacked. So many have attempted, though not actually to kill him, to beat him. But they could not do anything. As soon as they came near and saw Ramdas' smiling face, they lowered their hands and went away.

Q: How does Ramdas enter into or react to the sufferings of his brethren?

Ramdas: Ramdas does feel for the suffering of others. The sufferings touch him very deeply, and he wishes everybody to be happy. He knows the cause of their suffering. It is ignorance and lack of faith in God. So Ramdas goes about telling people that if anyone wants to be free from suffering, he should realise God, because physical and mental sufferings do not affect one when one communes with Him.

At the close of the meeting some light refreshments were served. But before this was done, as Ramdas got up, two members of the audience, one after the other, rushed towards Ramdas, embraced him heartily and kissed him. In this way they expressed the uncontrollable love that rose in their hearts for him. Actually, all the members assembled there were in a state of high ecstasy. The atmosphere was vibrant with a divine rapture. Many came individually to have a few words with Ramdas.

He felt that he was in the midst of people whom he had known for years and years. The familiarity, the intimate fellowship, that was created among the gathering on the occasion was, indeed, marvellous. The delightful experience is unforgettable.

Visit to Carmel

According to the programme already made by Dr. Spiegelberg, we had to go on a visit to a place called Carmel, about 150 miles from San Francisco. We were taken to that distant place by a young lady, Miss Margaret Lial, in her beautiful car. We started in the afternoon and reached Carmel the same evening. There we were the guests of an elderly lady named Miss Sophie E. Harpe. Miss. Harpe had made very nice arrangements in her house for our stay. Her self-denial was so great that in order to give us all comforts she occupied a very small room with a plain bed, placing the remaining rooms of the house at our disposal for our occupation. Miss Harpe is an Art teacher in a high school. She is a learned lady and being spiritually inclined, has a neat and small library containing books on religion and philosophy. We naturally liked each other. She used to take us to the place of meetings in her own car in driving which she displayed masterly skill.

Two meetings were held at the house of Mrs. Cherry, a famous artist of the place, in which Ramdas answered the following among other questions:

Are Indians Happier?

Q: Do you think people in India are happier?

Ramdas: Yes, because more people in India are thinking of God. It is not that they have more to eat and live upon, but they remember God and know that the external conditions alone are not responsible for one's happiness or unhappiness.

Q: Do you recognize group prayer?

Ramdas: There must be individual prayer as well as group prayer. Group prayer is also very helpful to elevate us. When we pray together we create an atmosphere full of divine peace and joy.

Mrs. Cherry was old, but she had a passion for a new style of painting pictures and scenes. She was also of a devotional temperament. It is said that to appreciate art one must be an artist oneself and possess the artist's eyes. A new art has come into vogue in America, which is held in great admiration by certain classes of people who are by nature aesthetic. We also saw some paintings of this type in the museum in the Stanford University. Ramdas for one could not appreciate the paintings exhibited there. This may be due to his lack of power to understand modern western art.

Vedanta Centre

Next day we returned to San Francisco in the car of our friend Miss Lial. Our stay in San Francisco was to terminate a day later. We could not pay a visit to the Ramakrishna Mission Vedanta Centre in San Francisco earlier as Swami Asokananda, its President, was away from the town. He had returned now and so we took the opportunity to go there for his Darshan. When we stepped into the temple-shaped building, which housed the Centre, we felt happy to meet the Swamiji who was all affability and kindness. We spent about fifteen minutes with him during which we came into contact with some of the students of the Centre. We have heard that the Swamiji was methodical in all that he did and possessed deep spiritual experiences and was conducting the various activities there with devotion and efficiency. It is always joy to meet saints. We felt blessed in having gone to this Centre also.

Integral Yoga of the Gita

That night Ramdas was taken to a big room in the Arts Centre where Dr. Chaudhuri, of whom Ramdas has already made mention, regularly held his Indian philosophy classes. There was a fairly large gathering of students. In the usual course, the Doctor first spoke to them on the subject of "Emotional Disturbances." His discourse was most interesting both in regard to the thoughts expressed and the language in which they were clothed. We learnt that Dr. Chaudhuri was very popular among his students and others who had cultivated great love and regard for him.

After his talk Ramdas spoke for half an hour on the Bhagavad Gita. He presented the three lines of approach which Sri Krishna says should be adopted by the spiritual aspirant concurrently. He divided the Gita into three sections—the first relating to Jnana or knowledge, the second to Bhakti or devotion and the third to Sharanagati or self-surrender. Before the human being can realise God in all His aspects, he should purify his mind and illumine it with divine wisdom, purify his heart and fill it with infinite love and surrender up his will to the divine will. So mind, heart and will have all to be dedicated to Him—the Master of our life.

CHAPTER XV

LOS ANGELES

Our stay in San Francisco having come to a close, we left it by air, as usual, for Los Angeles. At the airport of Los Angeles we met our friend Dr. Preston Kline Caye, a disciple of Swami Omkar.

When we were in San Francisco, two invitations came enclosed in the same cover, one from Dr. Preston and another from Bhaskarananda. The first invitation was to have lunch at Dr. Preston's place and the second invitation was for a visit to Bhaskarananda's institution, 'Lamasery.' It would appear from the two invitations that the persons who invited us were different. On our arrival, when we were going in the car from the airport to Dr. Preston's place, Ramdas asked him where Bhaskarananda lived. With a chuckle and eyes twinkling, Dr. Preston looking at Ramdas in his characteristic way said in a most disarming manner, "Dr. Preston and Bhaskarananda are one and the same person." We had indeed a hearty laugh over this joke. The name Bhaskarananda was, we learnt, given to the Doctor by Swami Omkar.

Dr. Preston is a spiritually elevated soul and while attending to his professional work as an eye doctor he is also spreading spiritual ideas by mailing regular courses of discipline to a large number of his disciples in several parts of U.S.A.

We took our lunch in his house, Mrs. Preston being all kindness and hospitality. After lunch we were taken by him to the hotel where we were to lodge during our stay in Los Angeles. As soon as we reached the rooms engaged for us, we met some Press reporters who not only took photographs of Ramdas, but also put several questions to him about his mission in U.S.A.

East-West Cultural Centre

Soon after, Dr. Judith M. Tyberg and Mrs. Hazal Hagood came to our rooms. Dr. Tyberg is a friend of Dr. Preston. She introduced herself as a disciple of Sri Aurobindo. She told us that she had been for about three years in the Banaras Hindu University, wherefrom she obtained a degree in Indian Religion and Philosophy. She has started in Los Angeles an institution called the East-West Cultural Centre, the object of which, as evident from the name itself, is to discover the common factors between the two great cultures and how their reciprocity and synthesis can bring about greater world-unity. In whatever field human life expressed itself, its one prime motive and purpose should be to know the basic principles underlying the activities of the race as a whole and thereby help in bringing about union and harmony among all its members. The East-West Cultural Centre is one such essentially useful institution working for world unity.

Dr. Tyberg, in collaboration with Ramdas prepared the programme to be carried out during Ramdas' stay in Los Angeles. The first meeting was held at the East-West Cultural Centre. The room was fully crowded. Besides Dr. Tyberg's friends and students, there were others also who were keenly interested in their spiritual welfare. Dr. Tyberg introduced Ramdas to the audience and asked them to put him questions on spiritual subjects.

Questions after questions were released like arrows making Ramdas their target. Of course, they were clothed in courteous language and asked with a view only to understand spiritual implications and clear doubts. God was so gracious to Ramdas that, whenever any question was put to him, he was inspired to give answers immediately without any thinking or hesitation. Ramdas himself was often wondering how the answers came so spontaneously from him. As Ramdas answered them, the appetite of the audience for knowing more of the deeper spiritual problems of life seemed only to be whetted. Some questions and answers were indeed remarkable. There was a sharp exchange of wit and wisdom. The atmosphere was tense with spiritual fervour. Ramdas enjoyed it as much as the congregation did. A few questions and answers are given below:

God is Like Yourself

Q: Have you realised God and have you seen Him?

Ramdas: Yes.

Q: What is He like?

Ramdas: Like yourself! All the forms that Ramdas sees are the revelations or manifestations of God.

Q: Have you any knowledge of the beginning of time and the earth?

Ramdas: Ramdas has been trying to find out whether there is such a thing as time at all. There is only infinity, there is only eternity, and our calculations of time and space are all arbitrary.

Q: Do you think mankind will be able to understand one-tenth of what you say here tonight?

Ramdas: They can understand and they can realise, but they don't want to.

Q: How can we always remember what you said?

Ramdas: You have come here to listen to what Ramdas said in order to remember it and not to forget. If you are really earnest, you cannot forget.

Cure the Disease of Life

Q: Can you heal yourself?

Ramdas: Of what?

Q: Of any sickness, disease, etc.

Ramdas: Physical sickness comes and goes. Why should Ramdas bother about it? That which comes and goes should not worry us. We must always tune ourselves with the Eternal wherein there is no disease or death. When we do so, what does it matter if the body is at one time ill and at other well? It is the nature of the body to have diseases and if you cure one, it may recur, or another may come. You must cure the disease of life itself, which is called ignorance and which brings death in its train. If you cure that you will be immortal and eternally happy.

Q: Have you reached a state called Nirvana?

Ramdas: What do you understand by Nirvana?

Q: Complete bliss and Ananda.

Ramdas: Nirvana is the word which is found in Buddhist scriptures. Even in the Bhagavad Gita, there is mention of Nirvana, which means liberation from the cycle of birth and death, from the bondage of desire. When desire is completely extinct, then it is that you realise that you are immortal and enjoy bliss and peace.

Q: Have you reached that state?

Ramdas: That Ramdas has already told you. Without his attaining that, he would never have come to tell you about it. He would have gone to some caves in the Himalayas. He would have no authority to talk to you about God if he had not attained Him.

Divinise Politics

Q: Don't you think you have to bring spirituality into politics?

Ramdas: We must spiritualise and divinise politics. Then politics as such will not be there. We will have to give it some other name. When the philosopher's stone touches iron, it is converted into gold. There is no more iron left. So if you divinise politics there will be no more politics left.

Q: Are you not the master of your own destiny?

Ramdas: God is the master of Ramdas' destiny.

At the close of the meeting the friends who assembled there crowded round Ramdas and were supremely happy to meet and exchange a few words with him individually. It was joy to talk to them because on the faces of everyone there was smile and cheer besides the glow of intelligence. Ramdas remembers how Dr. Tyberg, who virtually went into ecstasies, came near Ramdas and whispered into his ears, "Papa, your talk today was simply wonderful !"

Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta

Our next visit was to the Ananda Ashrama founded by Swami Paramananda, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda. Sri Gayatri Devi of Swami Paramananda's Ashram at Boston had, as already related, asked us to visit their Ashram in Los Angeles. We contacted Sister Daya, the head of the institution, and on the day fixed by her we went there. As we drove towards the hill in which this centre is situated, we felt as if we were going to an Ashram of an ancient type somewhere on the hills in India. The surrounding atmosphere, the scenes, the thick groves and the general appearance of the place were all reminiscent of such a spiritual retreat in India. After making enquiries we were able to reach the Ashram. News of our arrival went to Sister Daya who came running to greet and welcome us. Sister Daya is a fine elderly lady, tall in stature, dressed like a Catholic nun, her face glowing with purity, serenity and peace. It was evident she was highly delighted to receive us.

She first took us to the chapel or shrine. We saw there a long hall with hundreds of seats arranged for the congregation in front of a raised platform, wherefrom the spiritual head would deliver discourses or sermons. The place was permeated with the spirit of holiness and peace. Outside the chapel we saw the life-size statue of Swami Paramananda in a sitting meditation posture. Next she took us to a big room in another building, where we were asked to sit along with the devotees and followers of the Ashram, who must have been specially invited to meet us. Among them were some permanent inmates of the Ashram who were engaged in its various acts of service. Sister Daya moved amongst all as a holy mother, providing us with tea, milk and eatables.

Love Breaks All Barriers

Really, Love is a wonderful thing. Love breaks down all barriers. Even the physical consciousness is transcended when one is under the intoxication of love. What to say then of the other man-made distinctions created by allegiance to a particular religion, creed, institution, church or temple! In this spirit of universalism it was that those who assembled there communed with each other and felt supremely happy, as children in the presence of the Divine parent, God — our all-pervading Father and Mother.

One predominant feature we perceived here, as we did in some other similar places, was the unique devotion which the residents of the Ashram felt for their spiritual Master Swami Paramananda. The very name of the Swamiji used to raise thrills of delight in their hearts. So boundless was their love and veneration for their great Guru. We could see a parallel to this only in Sri Upasani Baba's Ashram at Sakuri in India.

Some enquiries were made by a few devotees who had gathered there about our Ashram and other matters. When it was time for us to take leave we came out in a body and stood for a few minutes in front of the Ashram in a state of unusual joy. The lady devotees could not contain themselves for the rapture they felt and were seen going near Mother Krishnabai evincing their great fondness for her. It was altogether a marvellous experience. It must be said of the Ashram that its atmosphere both inside and outside was breathing peace and sanctity.

Self-realisation Fellowship

The next day we had the delight of visiting another Ashram. This was founded by Swami Yogananda of whom Ramdas has already spoken earlier. Here also the President of the Ashram bears the name Sister Daya. When we motored into the Ashram porch, we were greeted with great love and welcome in the Indian style by about two dozen permanent inmates of the Ashram, headed by Sister Daya and Reverend M. W. Lewis who garlanded us. It was no small joy to see the bright faces of all who stood on the veranda to receive us. We were taken inside to the shrine room in which they had arranged for a special prayer out of their love for us. We all stood up and Dr. Lewis offered prayers reciting some verses in English glorifying the Supreme Spirit dwelling in the hearts of all.

We were, it must be understood, only pilgrims going from place to place for meeting spiritually illumined souls. We sought the company of devoted souls who held continuous communion with God and aspired for the beatitude born of perfect union with Him, so that He might enter into their lives and transform them into His illumined vehicles.

From the prayer hall we were led to various other parts of the Ashram, principally to their office and the rooms in which the magazines and books published by the Ashram were being despatched. The work was going on quite silently in an organized manner, meticulous care being taken to keep everything tidy, neat and in perfect order. It reminded us of the work in the office of Henry Thomas Hamblin at Chichester in England. It is always a pleasure to see things done in a methodical style. The Bhagavad Gita says, योग: कर्मसु कौशलम् "Yoga means skill in action." Here work is really worship. The work that we do should yield us pure joy. If we wish to have it thus as Karma Yoga, then work should be done as perfectly as possible, with great care and love. Slipshod, clumsy and disorderly work can never be conducive to efficiency, human elevation or happiness. It has become a fashion with some so-called spiritual aspirants to neglect their routine work, or do it in a half-hearted or indifferent way producing all about them disorder and confusion. This should not be. The inner beauty must reveal itself in external conduct. Mental equilibrium is a necessary condition for spiritual illumination. It denotes a state of balance between a highly enlightened mind and love-filled heart. When we have reached this state, our life becomes beautiful and glorious all round.

After we saw the ground floor of the Ashram we were taken upstairs and shown the library. Then we were led to a well-lit room for lunch. We sat round a big table. Sister Daya, who was all kindness and affection, saw to it that we were served only vegetarian food. On a chair alongside ours was placed a big photograph of Swami Yogananda taken a short time before he passed away in Samadhi. It appeared as if he was one of the party sitting with us for lunch. Verily, the Spirit of that great Swami seemed to be present there; all of us were intensely remembering him. God has said, "Where My devotees remember Me with all love and devotion, there I manifest Myself." Really, remembrance is a great force by which we can actually feel the omnipresent, invisible Spirit of God so much that we can realise His presence vividly in us, with us and everywhere around us. The lunch was a simple one. We had at intervals brief talks in which Dr. Lewis and Sister Daya spoke with great reverence of their Master. Altogether the time spent there was most delectable. The lunch over, we came down and stood for a while outside the Ashram on the lawn, when photographs were taken of us. We took leave of Dr. Lewis and Sister Daya, bearing in our hearts pure affection for them.

Future of the World

The next item of the programme arranged by Dr. Tyberg, was to pay a visit to St. Denis Religious Art Church where we met the famous dancer Miss Ruth. Being old, she had retired from her profession and was devoting her time for the culture of the soul, in other words, for her spiritual enlightenment. In the big hall of the church Ramdas sat along with the other members of the party by his side. Ramdas' speech here lasted for about three quarters of an hour at the end of which he was asked some questions by the assembled aspirants. In the course of the speech Ramdas said:

God-remembrance removes fear

As we see at present, there are war clouds gathering over us and people are stricken with the fear that there may be another great war breaking out soon. This fear must disappear from our hearts and we must be assured that there is a divine power that guides our destinies and if we put ourselves in the hands of that power, we are safe and secure. We speak of God on the one hand and are afraid of the coming war on the other. If America believes in God, as we are sure she does, it will be a paradox for her to harbour any fear. God is there in us, and about us, and by tuning our life with Him we can be fearless and also be sure He will protect us and will not allow another war to take place.

The following are some of the questions and answers at the meeting:

Q: Can you give some assurance about the future of the world?

Ramdas: Ramdas is not a prophet. He talks to you as God makes him talk. He feels in the bottom of his heart—and that feeling is also given by God—that there will be no war. Many people may not believe him when he says this. The preparations have gone so much ahead that they think there is bound to be another war. But Ramdas feels there will be no war.

World Brotherhood

Q: Will the relationship between India and America become closer?

Ramdas: It is not a question of America and India alone. America, India, England, Europe, Japan, Africa and Australia, will all come closer and stand united. We will have a world brotherhood. Of course, there will be friendship and nearer approach between India and America, because these represent two great forces in the world, one spiritual and the other material. We can envisage all this to happen. Surely, such a state will come about. It is not only a thing to be devoutly wished for, but it is sure to take place provided we have faith in God. God does not wish ill of us. We bring suffering upon ourselves. God is ever kind and ever good to us. We must seek Him. We must pray to Him, commune with Him and realise Him. Then everything will be all right.

At the end of the meeting, as a closing feature, a devotional dance was given by Miss Ruth. She went in and dressed herself for the occasion and came out dancing. Her dance exhibited serpentine movements of an ethereal type. There was perfect silence in the church. The slow movements of her dance created waves of peace that rose and fell in cadence. For us, who have never witnessed such dances, it was indeed a revelation. The impression left on our minds was a combination of surprise and elevation. God has His own ways. He seems to have taken us on this round-the-world tour for a variety of purposes. He showed us sights which we never saw before and brought us into contact with new types of men and women—His manifestations. He revels in variety. He plays indeed in multifarious ways. All glory to Him!

Dr. Preston availed himself of another occasion to take us to his place for lunch. His wife was as usual all kindness. After lunch Dr. Preston took Ramdas to his study upstairs. He showed Ramdas his books and correspondence file and some notes and scripts giving details of the method which he employed in propagating spiritual ideas among his friends. Dr. Preston is an enthusiastic believer in the Divine. He is having also regular contact through correspondence with Swami Omkar, from whom he draws inspiration for carrying on his work successfully.

To Ventura

Mr. Edward Fry had come to the Ashram some years ago when he was a bachelor. Soon after he returned to the United States he got married and is now employed as a teacher in a High School in Ventura where he lived in a small wooden house with his wife and two children. He was informed by letter from India of our trip to America and he had arranged with Dr. Tyberg to include in Ramdas' programme a visit to Ventura, which is about fifty miles from Los Angeles.

Fry came to take us to Ventura from Dr. Preston's house, where we were waiting for him after lunch. Only three of us went with him—Mataji, Satchidananda and Ramdas. It was a long drive. As the car sped on, Edward Fry, who drove the car and by whose side Ramdas was sitting, told us so many interesting things relating to Los Angeles and Ventura. Thus, it seems the name Los Angeles was given to the place as it was considered to be a resort of angels. He also told us about some historical associations of the place. As our road ran along the sea coast, we found the views on the route were very beautiful with the vast emerald expanse of the sea on one side and hills covered with green verdure and trees in different hues and shades on the other. The beach resembled those with which we were familiar in the east and west coasts of India.

The car stopped at the entrance of the school in which Fry was a teacher. He took us directly to his classroom where we met about twenty-five of his pupils. Fry introduced Ramdas to them. They evinced joy at seeing one from a far off land, dressed in the peculiarly Indian style in a long loose robe reaching to the feet. After a few minutes Ramdas was led into another classroom where Fry had arranged for a meeting which enabled Ramdas to contact a greater number of boys and girls and a few teachers of the school. This meeting was most entertaining inasmuch as the children shot at Ramdas several intelligent questions.

The place of Love in Education

There was one refreshing and admirable trait which Ramdas noticed in the children whom he met in Europe and America. It was that even before strangers, they were free, bold and frank, in other words, felt quite at home with anyone. Surely imparting education to children at their impressionable age is an important problem which should be tackled with great love and attention. While allowing the children to give free play to their innate creative tendencies in various fields, physical and mental, their pure child-like nature should be retained and developed at the same time. They should behave with the innocence and simplicity of children and still possess intelligence, efficiency, self-control and skill in action. The teacher should feel one with his pupils. Dry pedagogism is a bane to be avoided by a school master who is responsible for preparing young ones to face their various future problems. There should be love and understanding between the teacher and the taught. Here in this school Ramdas felt that this aspect of education was not neglected.

From the classroom Ramdas was taken down to the vast grounds on which stood buildings in which the various sections of the school were housed. Here the children were given training in handicrafts and industries. The open ground and the neat airy buildings presented to the eyes a pleasing sight. Here we met some new friends.

Edward Fry took us thereafter to his sweet little home where his wife and children were waiting to welcome us. We went in and found ourselves quite in a homely atmosphere. Mrs. Fry was all hospitality. We stayed with the family for about three hours during which, at the invitation of Fry, a few of his friends came to meet Ramdas. Some of them put Ramdas questions of spiritual and political importance. There was not much of earnestness in them for gaining any spiritual knowledge. However, we had an interesting time. Fry was simply gushing with joy. So also his wife. It was no small delight to see their children at play. The younger one, whose name is Christopher Mohammed, now and again rushed towards Ramdas and liked to be fondled. After the evening meal Fry motored us back to the hotel in Los Angeles.

Our next visit was to the house of an old lady by name Miss Mattalline Crabtree. All the five of us went to her place for lunch in response to her invitation. Miss Crabtree was extremely happy that we came to her house and in the exuberance of her joy she took us round her house showing us many important articles and pictures. She said the house belonged to Nurjihan, an American lady who assumed that name after she became the disciple of a great Indian sage. Nurjihan had visited India. Miss Crabtree believed that Nurjihan was a great mystic having supernatural experience. Before Nurjihan departed this life, she made over her house as a gift to Miss Crabtree, her ardent disciple. We saw the picture of Nurjihan, a tall lady, with a turban on, in the Indian fashion, and a radiant face with a smile playing on it. Miss Crabtree was all reverence and adoration to her.

After lunch we visited a cottage higher up from Miss Crabtree's house, where a widow lived alone in a beautiful little house. The lady went into ecstasies when we stepped into her cottage. She took us with overflowing joy to every room in the building,, where we saw perfect orderliness, all things being arranged with an artistic taste. It was evident the lady had a keen sense of beauty and was highly cultured. Her daughter was married to a Hindu in Bombay, of whom she spoke with great love and fondness. It was not what we saw or heard from her that mattered, but the affection and love with which she treated us and her unique faith in God. She looked upon every event that happened in her life as for her good. Her regrets were few, but her thankfulness to God for all that He did for her was immense.

First Universalist Church

The same evening we had an engagement in the First Universalist Church where Ramdas was asked to deliver a speech. On the rostrum by the side of Ramdas sat Dr. Tyberg. The audience was fairly large. After the speech Ramdas was asked several questions by both ladies and gentlemen. A few questions are given below:

Q: Do you believe in the annihilation of the soul in God?

Ramdas: No. It is the annihilation of only the ego-sense. When the ego-sense ceases to exist, we realise we are one with God. Even after that we retain the individuality, but it is fully illumined with the power, glory and light of God. So, having become one with Him, we still maintain a separate existence.

Q: What have you to say about Jesus who drove away the money changers out of the temple?

Ramdas: He did not do so out of hate, but out of pure love for bringing them on the right path. It was an act of correction. His love was so glorious and so ennobling that he could never see anybody worthy of condemnation. That is not what we do. We hate people and condemn them. Jesus' heart was a heart of gold.

Christ's Words on the Cross

Q: Why Christ said, "O Father, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Ramdas: Ramdas has heard that this interpretation is not correct. The real meaning of Christ's words **"Eloi, Eloi, Lamma Sabacthani!"** was something entirely different. It has been correctly interpreted as, "My God, My God, how much

Thou glorifieth me!" The language in which Jesus spoke was a compound of Hebrew and Aramaic Chaldee, and his words according to scholars, lend themselves to various interpretations.

Q: Do you think Christ was God?

Ramdas: Yes. Is it necessary for an Indian, and a Hindu, to come and tell you this?

Q: Can God be personified?

Ramdas: If He cannot be personified, how can He be omnipotent?

Q: Can God be really a person?

Ramdas: Why not? He is at once personal and impersonal.

Q: Why did he suffer?

Ramdas: By suffering he served and saved us.

Q: Could he not have done this in any other way?

Ramdas: Why not this way? We cannot expect him to do things in the way we wish. He liked that way of doing it.

Sister Daya of Swami Paramananda's Ashram was present in the congregation.

Vedanta Centre, Hollywood

In Hollywood there is an institution in the name of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, called the Vedanta Centre. It is presided over by Swami Prabhavananda, a distinguished disciple of Swami Brahmananda—Rakhal, the favourite *Chela* of Sri Ramakrishna. We made arrangements for our visit to this place by speaking on the phone with the secretary. Here again we were invited for lunch. An American disciple, who was given the name Krishna, came with the car to take us to the Centre. When we reached the main entrance, Swami Prabhavananda came down to receive us. When Ramdas got down, we clasped each other in a loving embrace and ascended the steps that led to the Centre with our hands locked in each other's. Swami Prabhavananda took us direct to the temple, artistically built in the Indian style, in which a beautiful picture of Sri Ramakrishna was installed. After we paid our respect to Sri Ramakrishna, we were taken to the sitting room of Swami Prabhavananda.

Soon after, we had our lunch which was purely vegetarian, prepared in the Bengali way. Then we were taken into a room where we were introduced to a very old lady who had had the good luck of having met and conversed with Swami Vivekananda. It was a real joy to see this venerable lady on whom Swami Vivekananda has left his spiritual influence that has transformed her life entirely. She appeared to be one who had found the Truth and lived a life, pure and innocent like that of a child. Before we boarded the car Ramdas had another happy embrace of the Swamiji who was all love and kindness to us.

'We had God among us'

The last but one meeting in Los Angeles was held at the East-West Cultural Centre of Dr. Tyberg. This was the second meeting here. Dr. Tyberg was all along very helpful to us, and under her able guidance all the programmes were systematically gone through, bringing Ramdas into contact with hundreds of spiritual aspirants of Los Angeles. In this meeting also a large number of aspirants were present, perhaps larger than on the previous occasions, for many of them were standing in the passage looking in by the doorways as the hall was overcrowded. Questions as usual were put to Ramdas and he answered them. At the close of the meeting Dr. Tyberg spoke a few words about Ramdas. Ramdas may quote here one sentence from her talk. She said "We really had God among us for a whole week and I know our future experience and acts will reveal our gratitude." These words show how far Dr. Tyberg and her friends have evolved in their spiritual outlook and experience. For, to recognise the greatness in another is to reveal one's own greatness. This is indeed a truism, but a sound one to remember. Saints are the very forms of the Divine seated in our heart. To acknowledge the greatness of saints is to be aware of the Divine within us.

The group of friends that attended the meetings at this Centre were unusually enthusiastic in their eagerness to learn about the way that led one to God. It is said that a person who struggles for the light and peace eternal, seeks the guidance of a Guru, a God-realised person, who can infuse courage and inspiration in him or her for marching on the difficult path through the turmoils, weaknesses and darkness of the mind to the supreme realm of divine radiance, peace and bliss. The soul is verily caught in a net of desires and passes through periods of unrest and despair. In this condition God alone can guide a person out of this maze to the haven of supreme liberty and beatitude. Those who are consciously endeavouring to go on this path should only possess keen aspiration for realising God. Then He takes the responsibility for their progress on the path and leads them as a mother does her child.

Dr. Paul Brunton

Dr. Paul Brunton is a well-known figure in the spiritual field. Ramdas first came to know of him by reading a small book called "The Maharshi and His Message" in which he recounts his visit to Sri Ramanashram and his contact and conversation with Sri Ramana Maharshi. Ramdas later learnt that this account formed part of a big book which Dr. Brunton wrote, under the name, "A Search in Secret India." On reading it, Ramdas was deeply impressed by his profound spiritual insight, as reflected in its pages. Dr. Brunton's books are widely read by English knowing aspirants all over the world. He has a facile pen and his expressions are lucid. Religious literature, to be inspiring, must be written by persons who have spiritual experience. Dr. Brunton's books belong to this category.

Dr. Brunton, after some years' stay in India, returned to the West; but before doing so he paid a visit to Anandashram and stayed with us for about five days. That was the first time Ramdas came in personal contact with him, and our love for each other was fixed.

From America Dr. Brunton kept up contact with Ramdas through correspondence and the Ashram monthly magazine THE VISION, of which he was a regular reader. Before we started on the world tour Ramdas wrote to him about it and was accorded in reply a hearty welcome to America. At New York Ramdas was met by some friends of the Doctor as advised by him. Here, at Los Angeles, Brunton himself came to see Ramdas at the hotel in which he stayed. Ramdas felt very happy to meet him and he knew that Dr. Brunton must have felt similarly on seeing him.

Dr. Brunton sent communications to all his devotees and admirers in Los Angeles and nearby places about Ramdas' visit to Los Angeles, asking them not to lose the opportunity of seeing Ramdas. Several of his friends did come to see Ramdas at the hotel. During all the meetings held in different centres in Los Angeles, these friends regularly came to listen to Ramdas' talks. In all Ramdas met Dr. Brunton here three times.

Mr. Ray Magee Jr., whom we met in Los Angeles, is one of our intimate friends in America. He had paid a visit to the Ashram some years ago. He is of a quiet, kindly and peaceful nature. He is deeply spiritual and interested in the comparative studies of religions. He is a minister in a church. He attended some of the talks Ramdas gave in various Centres during his stay in Los Angeles. True Christians are really those who love Christ with all their heart, and extend their love to all human beings in the world. The test of our love for God lies in our loving His whole creation, for He pervades everywhere. We are happy to have met Ray Magee, who is a true Christian.

Go beyond Mental Planes

The last meeting at Los Angeles was at the house of Mrs. Southward, a friend of Edward Fry. We had to go from the hotel to her place about ten miles away. In the sitting room of this lady there were about half a dozen people. Ramdas was asked some questions on psychology, because the lady was a psychiatrist, i.e. one who has studied psychology and uses the powers gained by this knowledge for curing the mental diseases of people who seek her help. Ramdas' mission is not to allow people to dwell only on the mental plane, but to make them transcend it.

To unravel the mysteries of the sub-conscious mind for tracing the source of different thoughts, desires and emotions is not the real purpose of life. True, such researches may be of relative value to cure persons of their psychosis and help to restore their disturbed balance of mind. But our aim should be to go beyond all relative planes and attain the Absolute, getting merged in the infinite vastness of divine life and consciousness. The meeting was a pleasant one as the assembled people communed with each other in perfect love and friendliness.

Limitation of Material Prosperity

As Ramdas is coming to the end of the narrative of the tour in America he may make here some general observations relating to American life. In the United States we hardly find people in want, and beggary is almost unknown. The people there eat well, dress well, work well and live on the material plane entirely free from any deficiency. But it must be understood that mere possession and enjoyment of material objects cannot grant the peace which the soul thirsts for. Such peace can be had only by attuning the individual soul with the universal Soul—God. Due to the glamour of material prosperity, God is very much at a discount in their luxurious lives. This is also true of a great many people in other countries of the world. Nevertheless, we find everywhere a section of the people keenly aspiring for God, seeking the peace of the Eternal. Ramdas met innumerable men and women of such leanings in America and the other countries that he visited. These people cherish great ideals and naturally possess the virtue of generosity. The hearts of such people are easily kindled by the light shed on them by the teachings of divinely-inspired souls born in their midst or who come to them from outside.

Message to Americans

On the eve of his departure from America, at the request of Dr. Preston Kline Caye, Ramdas gave the following message:

Ramdas came to the U.S.A. from India on a mission of Divine Love and Peace. On the eve of his departure he has a few words to say to our American friends.

Ramdas has been touring in the United States for over a month and during the itinerary he visited New York, St. Paul, Seattle, San Francisco, Carmel and Los Angeles. In all these places groups of friends greeted him with all love and affection. He addressed altogether about twenty-five meetings in America in the course of a month.

There is, indeed, as Ramdas felt, a great spiritual awakening in the hearts of Americans. If we ignore the spiritual values of life and get only absorbed in rushing activity, there cannot be any harmony and peace for the soul. God, the Universal Spirit, is the divine origin of all beings on this earth. In the light of the realisation of God alone it will be possible to have peace and goodwill in the life of humanity. Belief in an all-loving and omnipotent God is not compatible with the harbouring of a sense of fear and insecurity. If we truly take His name and rely upon His goodness and grace, we should be free from all doubts and anxieties.

In the hurly-burly of a fast life, people in the world have forgotten God. Very often, we find they even question His very existence. God is an all-beneficent power and truth having intimate relationship with everyone of us; for He dwells in the hearts of us all. His will is supreme!

Let us pray with all the strength of our devotion to Him to lead mankind on the path of truth and righteousness and thereby create an atmosphere of mutual trust among nations so that the prevailing state of uncertainty, ill-will and discord may totally disappear. Man's effort alone, without the enlightening grace of God, is of no avail as we have found out to our great chagrin and sorrow. May God grant us the right sense to understand His ways and follow the path that leads to world harmony and peace!

On the day of our departure from Los Angeles for Honolulu in the Hawaii Islands, Dr. Preston and his wife, Dr. Tyberg and Mrs. Hagood escorted us to the airport. The fact that these friends came there to bid us farewell, showed how their hearts were perturbed at the thought of separation from us. As the plane took off we saw them gazing towards us from the airport with eager, longing and loving looks.

CHAPTER XVI

HAWAII

Honolulu

We reached Honolulu where we were received at the airport by Mrs. Emma A. Lindsay and Mr. Floyd Nowell. When Emma Lindsay saw us coming towards the airport from the plane she was excited with joy, and over the railing shook Ramdas' hands. We went inside and were received by Sri J. Watumull, a longstanding businessman in Honolulu, with his American wife. Soon we reached the Hotel where arrangements had been made for our stay by Emma Lindsay.

Honolulu is a beautiful place. It forms part of the Hawaii Islands, almost in the middle of the Pacific ocean, with the vast expanse of blue sea all round, lending it a peculiar charm. The place has developed into a replica of a flourishing American city. It has all the conveniences, comforts and luxuries which are the gifts of western civilization. After over two months' tour in Europe and America, we could witness here scenes similar to those in the East. The tall coconut trees, some standing erect and others leaning in different directions, their heads nodding in the strong breeze blowing from the sea, reminded us of the west coast of India. The place was fertile. It had high chains of hills covered with thick growth of shrubs and trees. These presented cooling and fascinating scenes to our eyes which were tired of looking at crowded cities with all their tall drab dismal buildings, artificial appliances, machinery and other equipments made for obtaining the maximum comfort without regard for beauty.

Joel Goldsmith

Emma Lindsay one day invited us for lunch at her small wooden house, situated about ten miles from the hotel in which we lived. She was all love and kindness. She is the secretary of Mr. Joel Goldsmith, a personality of outstading spiritual eminence, who is giving valuable lessons to the aspirants who seek aid from him. Emma Lindsay is a great admirer and devotee of Joel Goldsmith, for she is also a highly evolved soul who has devoted her life to the contemplation of God. She is helping him among other ways in recording his speeches and after duplication sending them to various centres in America and Europe where his adherents live. These records are played back by them on their machines which indeed makes them feel that they are listening to the spiritual advice from Joel Goldsmith directly. Voice reproduction marks a great advance in science. This invention has been utilized for carrying the messages of spiritual masters to their disciples in far off places not only in their words, but also in their own voice.

Mr. Floyd Nowell was one of the party at the lunch at Emma Lindsay's. He is a genuine spiritual seeker and has greatly advanced on the path. His face is bright and serene showing that his mind is successfully attuning itself with the inner Divine during his spiritual practices. He was a constant visitor to the hotel and ardently listened to Ramdas' talks on spiritual topics.

Another evening we were invited by Watumull to his brother's house where we had our meal. Ramdas was asked to speak something here about the real aim of life. All the members of Watumull family were present. Ramdas spoke about the futility of depending upon the things of the world for one's happiness. Dependence upon persons and things for relief and security is also a gross mistake. There is only one prop, one refuge, one support for all beings, and that is God. Those who take shelter in Him can have no fear, sorrow and bondage. Life will then be filled with true happiness and peace. This was the gist of what Ramdas talked. The wife of Watumull's nephew, who had recently lost her husband and was in sore distress, was one of the eager listeners in the group.

God is our Mainstay

Here Ramdas met a wandering Gujarati friend who had been touring from one country to another without the requisite kit or money. We had occasion to meet this friend before somewhere in Bombay or Gujarat. He was a tall man with a beard, who possessed a staunch faith in God. When he was asked by Watumull's brother how he managed to travel without money or clothes, and also without the knowledge of any European languages —for this friend could not speak even English—he replied that God was his guide and that he depended upon Him entirely and He looked after him, providing him with all things. This simple trust in God was his mainstay. Although people who heard him wondered how such a thing could be possible, Ramdas for one was not in the least surprised because, in his personal experience all through his life, from the day God accepted him as His own, this fact has been fully verified. Truly, those who surrender themselves to God are taken care of by Him with all tenderness. That is indeed Ramdas' unflinching faith from which comes fearlessness, peace, assurance and security. Our world tour is also an instance of how God protected us all in every way through the strenuous times we had to face.

A Beauty Spot

When we were in Honolulu we paid a visit, on invitation, to the house of Mr. J. V. Masson, an American friend, whom we newly contacted. This house was situated on the very brink of the sea, commanding a beautiful ocean view. We went there in an evening and had our milk and bread with him. Masson, his wife and children were very devout by nature. They liked our company immensely. They took us another day on an excursion for sight-seeing. There were various beauty spots in Honolulu and the friend selected one of the best of them and when we were there we were charmed with the surroundings. The deep blue sea before us was extremely delightful to the sight. The waves dashing on the coral reefs, the spray caused by their rising to great heights, the calm and serene atmosphere, the distant, green landscapes,—all contributed to make the place look like a paradise. One thing noteworthy here is that when the spray goes high and the sun's rays are reflected in it, we see a bewitching rainbow produced in the spray. The scenes are still fresh in Ramdas' mind and they come vividly before him when he recollects them. God has revealed His beauty everywhere in thousand and one ways.

In Honolulu there was no public function. Emma Lindsay, Floyd Nowell and another lady had silent meditation in Ramdas' company in the hotel room for a few minutes. A lady reporter who came to interview Ramdas took down some notes about his life and mission, which appeared as an article in a Honolulu newspaper. The last evening meal provided by Masson was taken by all of us together, at the hotel, where Emma Lindsay and Nowell also joined us.

It was by an evening plane that we left for Japan. Our Honolulu friends came to see us off at the airport. The parting was of course, as usual, a hard wrench. The friends were visibly moved when we walked up to the aeroplane, and at the last moment, when we were just passing the gate, Watumull also came hurrying to bid farewell.

Time is an Illusion

We travelled to Japan by the Japanese Airlines. The journey from Honolulu to Tokyo was a long one. We had a halt for about an hour at Wake Islands. In the course of this flight we lost a day! We started on a Wednesday and reached Tokyo the next day but we found it was Friday. We never saw Thursday! This again proves how illusory time is and how it is purely a product of man's imagination. There is only eternity. This is the truth. The inconstancy or the ever-changing nature of time, is a sure indication of its unreality or non-existence. It is the moving mind that makes us see movement everywhere, putting us under the illusion that movement alone is real. But when the mind attains a state of perfect stillness, free from all restlessness, we immediately experience the changeless or immutable Reality in which change and movement seem to be merely like waves on the ocean.

CHAPTER XVII

JAPAN

Tokyo

We reached Tokyo in the morning at about 10 o'clock. At the airport three Japanese friends came to meet us. They belonged to a spiritual movement called 'Seicho-No-Ie' of which a saintly personality, Dr. Masaharu Taniguchi, was the leader. We had contacted these friends through correspondence, being introduced to them by Mr. Schmidt of Reutlingen, Germany. Sri B. R. Abhayanker, an officer in the Indian Embassy, to whom we had written for arranging accommodation in a hotel in Tokyo, could not be present at the airport. But the arrangements requested for had been duly made by him. We went to the hotel escorted by the Japanese friends.

Tokyo is the capital of Japan where the Emperor lives. Our first impression on passing through the streets of Tokyo and looking at the buildings and people was that the city must have very badly suffered in the last world war. We know the great tragedy of Hiroshima which was destroyed by an atom bomb dropped by the Americans during the war. Several parts of Tokyo were subjected to destruction by bombs and the city seemed to have put on a sombre mask significant of a sense of frustration and economic distress. There was, of course, the usual activity, the busy thoroughfare, the motor cars rushing along the roads and the populace engaged in their various occupations. But the spirit of joy, peace and harmony was lacking.

The Japanese friends who met us at the airport were extremely kind and gracious to us. God's ways are mysterious. We did not know any friend in Tokyo before we landed there. God gave us these friends who all along our stay were extremely helpful. They, in consultation with us, drew up a programme which we followed.

Buddhist Temple

On the first day we did not know where to go as we could not contact the Japanese friends who led us to the hotel. We went out in a taxi sight-seeing and on our suggestion, the taxi driver brought us in front of a Buddhist temple known as "Honganji". We got down and wended our way to the temple which was a pretty big one. We peeped in and found that about sixty to seventy monks clad in long robes were engaged in prayers. They were also singing in chorus in their resonant voice some scriptural verses. We entered the temple and sat down on the benches provided for the visitors. The whole ceremony of prayer was serene, august and inspiring. We remained inside the temple for about fifteen minutes and then came out.

Tea Ceremony

On the following day we visited "Go-kokuji", another Buddhist temple. Here the Japanese friends were our guides. We found ourselves in front of the huge temple, before which there was a big image of Buddha in the open-air in a sitting posture. To our left there was a set of rooms where we were led by the friends. Having removed our shoes we got in and after passing through a corridor and one or two rooms, we came upon a small apartment in which a few Buddhist devotees and monks were seated on a carpet spread out on the floor. Welcomed by the priest, we also sat down along with them.

After waiting in the room for about fifteen minutes, we were asked to go into the adjoining room where we were the honoured guests at what was known as the Tea Ceremony. A few Japanese ladies present prepared green tea and served it along with some eatables. The beauty of the function consisted in the calmness, serenity, perfect courtesy and slow movement that marked the whole ritual. The ladies who served us walked about without producing the least noise and in a most respectful manner. Whatever may be the other peculiarities we observed, this courteous behaviour, accompanied by the loving, reverential way with which we were entertained by them, was a unique experience. After the ceremony was over, we left the place, bidding good-bye to the chief priest and thanking him for his kind hospitality.

Prof. D. T. Suzuki : Zen Buddhism

Next day we arranged for an appointment with Prof. D. T. Suzuki, of whom we had heard much in the U.S.A. He is a well-known exponent of what is called Zen Buddhism. This is understood to be a particular Buddhist sect, the followers of which claimed to practise the pure teachings of Buddha. The founder of Zen Buddhism was Bodhidharma. He has a large following in Japan and other parts of the world. Some prominent disciples of the founder have started in different parts of Japan monasteries for training and guiding seekers to the supreme goal of Nirvana.

The methods of spiritual practice followed in these monasteries are in many respects similar to those observed in old hermitages in India. It seems the rigorous discipline and self-mortification which the aspirants have to pass through are very rigid, hard and exacting. The mode of training, it is said, is by a process of shocks which are expected to still the aspirant's mind and grant him the awareness of the immortal Spirit within. Ramdas was eager to know something about Zen Buddhism which was spoken of in high terms by its votaries in Switzerland and the United States. Hence the appointment with Prof. Suzuki.

The Professor told us over the phone that we could meet him at a certain hotel on a morning. Accordingly we went there and met him. He was a short-statured elderly person dressed in immaculate European dress. A young American lady, who was his secretary, was also with him. We sat together round a table and talked for about half an hour. Prof. Suzuki told us he was only a lay man and not a Bhikku or a monk, who has dedicated his life for the attainment of Nirvana. Some questions which Ramdas put to him and his answers are given below:

Zen existed before Buddha

Ramdas: Would you kindly tell us what Zen Buddhism stands for?

Suzuki: Zen was developed in China, but according to Buddhist tradition the teaching or practice of Zen is based on the historical fact that Buddha obtained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree through the practice of Zen some 2500 years ago. How we obtain that enlightenment is what Zen teaches.

Ramdas: Had Zen existed before Buddha?

Suzuki: Zen existed even before Buddha came and will exist even after the world comes to an end. Buddha was but an instrument to tell us what Zen is.

In the course of the conversation Prof. Suzuki remarked that mainly four religions prevail in Japan. These are Shintoism, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. The first stands for harmony, the second for reverence, the third for purity and the fourth for tranquillity. Prof. Suzuki was kind and affable. He talked to us in a most friendly manner.

Mention may also be made here of the visit to our hotel of a French lady who had lived for some time in a Buddhist monastery. She came specially to see Ramdas on hearing about him. She told Ramdas about the mode of life in a monastery—the strict disciplines which the seekers or aspirants are enjoined upon to observe. It cannot be denied that the great Truth, call it by any name you like, can be experienced or realised only through hard and continuous self-discipline. Nothing can be gained in the spiritual field unless we put forth all the power, physical and mental, we possess, for self-control and self-purification with the sole object of attaining supreme inner freedom and peace.

Dr. Masaharu Taniguchi: Seicho-No-Ie

Another day, we visited the Seicho-No-Ie—an institution which propagates the principles of universal religion. Its members stand for world brotherhood. The leader of this movement is Dr. Masaharu Taniguchi. We were happy to meet him, his wife and son at the 'Home of Infinite Life, Wisdom and Abundance' which the term

'Seicho-No-Ie' means. Our Japanese guides were also members of this association and held Dr. Taniguchi in the highest reverence as he was their spiritual guide and master. Dr. Taniguchi is a man of middle age dressed in the European style. On his face we found a lustre of calmness and serenity. We sat together on sofas round a table after the usual greetings and bowings. The Japanese way of offering salutation to another is to bend down pretty low before the person respected. Dr. Taniguchi does not know English. So one of his disciples acted as an interpreter. Ramdas answered several questions put to him by the Doctor. We had indeed a quiet and happy time with him. A few of the questions and answers are given below:

Ramdas wants to be reborn

Dr. T: When did you begin to get into religion?

Ramdas: Thirty-three years ago, when Ramdas was thirty-eight years old.

Dr. T: Why did you enter religion?

Ramdas: God made him enter it. He drew him towards him.

Dr. T: Have you any other real reason for entering into religion?

Ramdas: No.

Dr. T: How did you know God called you?

Ramdas: Ramdas felt it within. There is no other reason. If there are any external reasons in the eyes of others, they are not real.

Dr. T: What about reincarnation?

Ramdas: Yes. There is reincarnation or rebirth for those who have not reached spiritual perfection. Those who have reached spiritual perfection are not born again. When desires are gone, one cannot be reborn.

Dr. T: Do you want to be reincarnated?

Ramdas: Yes, to tell everybody to think of God and love all. Ramdas has attained liberation and there is no need for him to come back again. But for the sake of serving humanity he would wish to come again.

In the afternoon Ramdas was taken to the same building, but to another hall where a group of about twenty to thirty Japanese had assembled to hear Ramdas' talks. Here again another Japanese friend became the interpreter. Ramdas talked for about an hour on "World Religion and Brotherhood" and the interpreter gave his translation in Japanese. A pleasant hour was spent in this most delectable company. It was clear that all those who were present there were real seekers of Truth and had shed all narrow denominational views of religion.

A Pathetic Sight

On the last day of our stay in Japan, in response to an invitation which we received from the emperor's palace at the instance of our Japanese friends, we went to the palace grounds. At the huge gate of the palace park we were greeted by the Japanese friends headed by Dr. Taniguchi. We entered a vast enclosure extending for a few miles, with long curving roads and pathways, beautiful gardens and groves, and waterways over which bridges were built for easy crossing, studded here and there with houses and buidings. We saw the scenes within mostly going in motor cars. We reached at last a big plot of land on which we found only beds of beautiful flowers. Here at one time stood the palace of the emperor, which was destroyed by bombs during the war. The sight was really a pathetic one. The pomp, grandeur and suzerainty symbolised in the palatial structure had all vanished!

After walking over the land on which the palace stood at one time, we went round to see other sights. We saw a building in which the remains of the departed members of the Japanese royal family were kept. According to Shintoism, which is the State religion, the highest worship is offered to the dead kings and heroes. Similarly, at another place we found a huge temple-like building which was meant only for the preservation of the remains of the past emperors. Here crowds of people come daily to offer their worship and reverence to the departed souls. Every day, a large number of volunteer workers, both men and women, who possess great devotion to the royal family, come and serve in the grounds for clearing dry leaves and other debris that accumulate there from day to day. The number of these self-appointed servers may come to about 200. For them, indeed, the service of the king is worship of God, because to them kings are verily gods.

One other rare sight which we witnessed was a garden in which there were stunted dwarf trees not more than four to five feet high, which, we were told, were one to two thousand years old! The trunks of these dwarf trees were so twisted that we could find out easily they were of considerable age. All through our wanderings in the palace grounds we were accompanied by Dr. Taniguchi, his wife and son, as also the other Japanese friends. We understood that the present Emperor who did not wish to build a new palace for himself, owing to the depleted condition of the Government treasury, was living in a small building which was used during the war days as an air-raid shelter. This is a highly commendable example of patriotism which other heads of States will do well to follow.

Japan's Destiny

Japan rose and fell like a meteor. The Japanese are one of the most intelligent and industrious people having the capacity to learn things rapidly. Their quick power of grasping and adaptation raised them at one time to the industrial, administrative and scientific level of the western countries of Europe and America. They drew their inspiration from these nations and by close association learnt the secrets of modern technical arts and science from them and rapidly rose in power and prosperity far above the other nations of the East. But war, the great leveller of proud persons and nations in the world, brought about a revolutionary change in Japan. The turning point in a man's or nation's life comes when God in His mercy humbles them to the dust by destroying their pride, ambition and lust for false power and glory.

Every nation has got its own high traditions and ideals. So Japan can also be proud of hers. For courtesy, hospitality and fine manners Japan compares well with other countries of the world, if she does not on a higher level. Japan should rise again and carve out a great future for her people in which the principles taught by the four great religions prevalent there should dominate and guide her destiny.

CHAPTER XVIII

HONGKONG

Our next place of visit was Hongkong, an island near the Chinese mainland, under the administration of the British Government. As our plane from Tokyo reached Hongkong airport we were received by Mr. Dinshawji Paowalla, who is known also as Ramdas, Mrs. Banoo Ruttonjee, Sri N. C. Patel, Sri M. H. Mahatani, Mr. S. L. Yen and many other friends. Their joy on seeing us was indeed great. Mrs. Ruttonjee was simply overflowing with devotion. We were taken directly to a hotel at Kowloon where we were comfortably lodged.

The same evening we were invited to the house of Mrs. Ruttonjee where Dinshawji Paowalla also lived. Mrs. Ruttonjee and other members of the family warmly welcomed us and took us to their big drawing room where visitor friends were also present. As the names denote, Mrs. Ruttonjee and Mr. Paowalla are Parsis. The readers know the Parsis form one of the most prominent communities in Bombay. They are forward in all business and industrial enterprises and have contributed largely towards the material progress of Inida by their keen sense of duty and unflinching application to business activites. Sri J. N. Tata's is a name to be conjured with in the industrial and manufacturing field of India. The Parsi community has also deservedly earned the fame of being one of the most generous-natured people of India. We were treated to a nice vegetarian meal by our hostess Mrs. Ruttonjee. A few questions were put to Ramdas by the friends gathered here, of which the following are some:

World Teacher comes when called

Q: Is it true that there is a world-teacher coming soon?

Ramdas: If all people wish that such a great teacher should come, he will surely come. Such teachers come by the wish of people. Avatars are but the unmanifest Reality appearing in flesh and blood at the call of the people. You know the sloka in the Bhagavad Gita:

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥
(IV-7)

"Wheneve there is a decline of Dharma, O Arjuna, and ascendancy of Adharma, I incarnate myself."

Whenever there is unrighteousness in the world and people are calling upon God to liberate them, He assumes a body and liberates them from the sufferings they are passing through.

Q: Does He not come by His own wish?

Ramdas: He does not come unless we call Him. God is everywhere. Just as milk is everywhere in the cow and through the udder alone we get the milk, so although He is invisible, pervading everywhere, we cannot have Him as an Avatar unless we call for Him.

Q: Human beings can by their endeavour get emancipation. How about animals?

Ramdas: Animals can evolve into human beings and then struggle for emancipation. In the animal state they cannot do anything themselves to gain final emancipation. They evolve to higher forms of life, become human beings some day and in that state they will strive for liberation and attain it.

A word here about Ramdas, the Parsi friend, will not be out of place. He is given to a purely contemplative life and is engaged in spiritual practices. He is looked upon by Mrs. Ruttonjee and the family, as also by other Parsis and Hindus as a spiritually illumined soul—a man of renunciation who does not care either for money, position or celebrity. We found him bright, smiling and carefree, which are the qualities of a person who has attained inner light and peace. His talk always revealed the fact that his heart was with God. Our going to Hongkong was solely due to the attraction which this friend exerted on us. We had known him by name and by correspondence for many years, and our magazine *The Vision* has been regularly going to him.

Aurobindo Philosophical Circle

N. C. Patel was a new friend who was also responsible for our visit to Hongkong. He is a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and has started a Philosophical Circle in the name of that great Yogi. With such loving friends in Hongkong our stay there could not but be quite happy.

During our stay in Hongkong, besides the invitations we had for lunch and evening meal at the houses of Sindhi, Punjabi and Parsi friends, we had only two meetings, one at Sri Aurobindo Philosophical Circle, started by N. C. Patel, and the other at Sri Lakshminarayan Temple, newly erected by the Hindu community at Hongkong. These meetings were held on the same day. First we went to the rooms of N. C. Patel in one of which the meeting was held. The room was too small to hold the people who came in large numbers. However, sitting in the midst of these friends, Ramdas freely talked for an hour, which was followed by some questions and answers. The following are a few of them:

Object of discipline

Q: Our ultimate end is freedom, and we have to be free of disciplines. Discipline is therefore the cause and result is freedom. We start with discipline and our final aim is freedom. Is it not?

Ramdas: Discipline is the means and the end is freedom. A bird is caught in a cage and struggles to be free. What is the means of attaining freedom? Breaking the cage. Discipline is breaking the cage.

Q: Are you under any discipline now?

Ramdas: No. When you have broken the cage and come out, where is the question of breaking the cage any more?

We are the Reality

Q: Since you say we are from that supreme Reality.....

Ramdas: We are the Reality and not from the Reality.

Q: How and when did we find we are individuals?

Ramdas: You do not see the beginning of it, but it is there. How it came and why it came, our intellect is unable to find out. That question does not therefore arise, and the intellect is too poor to gauge the ways of the Infinite. But we know we are caught and our concern is only how to get out of the cage.

Ramdas was in a state of overflowing ecstasy when he was speaking. He transcended the time-limit fixed for him, as he was carried away by the lofty tenor of the subject he was dealing with. Among the audience there were several Chinese friends who loved to hear Ramdas' talks.

Lakshminarayan Temple

In the evening we were taken to the Lakshminarayan temple. It is a beautiful artistic structure, where all the skill of the architect is displayed. The images of Lakshmi and Narayan installed in the temple, chiselled out of white marble, are most attractive and charming. After Pooja and Bhajan Ramdas was asked to address the assembled devotees. In the course of his speech Ramdas said:

> People do not know what the Name of God can do. Those who repeat it constantly alone know its power. It can purify our mind completely. No other Sadhana can do that. While the other Sadhanas can take us only to a certain stage, the Name can take us to the summit of spiritual experience.

As our Hotel was situated in Kowloon, in the mainland, and all the programmes of meetings and visits to houses were in Hongkong, we had to cross the strait by a motor-boat. Hongkong is a beautiful place. It has one of the finest harbours and it is a great trading centre.

Buddhist Monastic Disciplines

An important item in the programme at Hongkong worth relating here was our visit to several Buddhist temples situated in the New Territory in the mainland. The leader of our party was our Chinese friend Mr. S. L. Yen. In these temples we saw huge images of Buddha and also of other deities. We could observe that a good deal of the rituals of other religions was mixed up with the Buddhist forms of worship. Buddha's teachings and edicts had undergone such changes in their application that we could see the original teaching of Buddha hardly prevalent anywhere in these so-called Buddhist shrines.

We got admission to every part of the temples and met the monks presiding over them. The monks were kind and solicitous. Buddhism is in a state of decadence in these places. Still, by the very fact that Buddha's votaries held Him in the highest reverence, there is in all these places of worship a sanctity which the visitors could not but recognize. At one place we saw a huge book of hundreds of sheets containing the Pali texts of Buddha's teachings written by hand by a monk whose whole life mission was to do this work as a principal part of his discipline. In the same place, we were told, that for self-purification through the repetition of a Mantra, the aspirant had to forego sleep for 90 days. All the time he should be on his legs and moving about in a room uttering the Mantra given to him by his Master. Often the aspirants failed in the process of Sadhana and collapsed because during that period they were not permitted to take rest or even sit for a short time. This strenuous discipline, in spite of its unattractive, nay, repelling nature, is adopted by so many Buddhist novices for the attainment of Nirvana or enlightenment.

The struggle of the human soul for the achievement of the supreme liberation from the thraldom of bondage or desire has assumed innumerable forms. It is perfectly true that, until we conquer the flesh, the spirit cannot be released from the meshes of Maya or illusion. Such self-mortifying and rigorous Sadhana, we find, is common to all religions which have among their injunctions the espousal of a monastic life detached from the world, aiming at the transcendence of the limitations set by the human mind and taking flight into the infinite existence—Truth. Man can raise himself from the human to the divine plane only when the Spirit triumphs over matter and the human consciousness gives place to the divine consciouness. God, Truth or liberation is the eternal quest of humanity, because the goal of everyone is the attainment of supreme and everlasting peace.

After visiting the Buddhist temples, at midday we reached the house of Miss Tsang Pik Shan, a Chinese school mistress who had prepared lunch for us. Mr. Yen and other Chinese friends also joined us in the lunch.

Here we saw how the Chinese took their food with the help of chopsticks. We had heard about it but had no occasion to see how it was done. With two sticks held between the forefinger or the middle finger and the thumb, they convey boiled rice into their mouths in a most skilful manner. We attempted to do so, but utterly failed. This was natural because it needs long practice to perform this act.

Women Saints of the World

After lunch we were taken to a Buddhist nunnery. In the nunnery we saw a grand worship-hall with a shrine wherein were installed the images of Sri Gautama Buddha, Medicine Master Buddha and Amitabha Buddha. Excepting in Buddhism and Roman Catholicism we do not hear of women becoming nuns dedicating their lives entirely to God, and living in monasteries all by themselves with the object of undergoing severe discipline for inner purification and illumination.

Just as man has aspiration for the Divine, so also a woman. So women must be given ample opportunities to walk on the path that leads to Nirvana or salvation. We had in India many cases of women who have reached the highest spiritual attainment. We had our Maitreyi, Gargi, Anasuya, Sabari, Gopis of Brindavan, Mirabai, Janibai, Muktabai, Andal. Avvayar and Sarada Devi. Europe had St. Theresa, St. Clara, St. Mary, St. Monica, St. Barbara and many others. In the present day also we are having in our midst Ananda Mayi, Mother Mira, Godavari Mata, Rama Devi and Krishnabai. Among the illumined women of the present day in Europe and America we may mention Mrs. Gertrude deKock, Sister Daya and Gayatri Devi. These contemporary women saints are scattered over several parts of the world. They have a large following who receive light and inspiration from them on the spiritual path. Most of them are the heads of spiritual institutions which are open to all persons who choose to go there to receive inspiration and enlightening influence.

The drive through the New Territory was a most pleasant one, for we had a vast and sweeping view of that part of the country which formed part of the Chinese mainland. Going further we found ourselves on the border line between the New Territory and Communist China. We returned to the hotel by evening. Next morning we left Hongkong for Bangkok. Great many friends were present at the airport when we boarded the plane.

CHAPTER XIX

THAILAND

Bangkok—Buddha's Mission

We reached Bangkok in the afternoon. The friend who was to meet us here and arrange for our stay was away in India. However, we managed to get accommodation in a hotel called Park Hotel. Our stay in Bangkok was not eventful. There were no meetings and no contact with the Siamese people. God perhaps wanted us to visit Bangkok only to see three images of Buddha in three different places—one in a reclining posture, the other sitting and the third standing. These images were huge in size. The reclining one was about 145 feet long and the standing one was of the same height. The sitting Buddha was the finest in shape and appearance. We stood before this gigantic figure and gazed at it with wonder mixed with reverence. It is in the nature of man, whenever he holds anyone in the highest reverence and estimation and wants him to be permanently enshrined in the heart as such, to make images of him of extraordinary size. Greatness is associated with gigantic proportions. The simple human mind works always along this line, conceiving of persons or things which it worships as having abnormal dimensions.

Among the Jains in India we find that Mahaveera, Thirthankar and other Digambaras are represented in huge images carved out of rock as high as 60 or 80 feet, standing erect as though waiting for the worship of their innumerable devotees. In the making of these idols, the devoted sculptor had to play an important part. It is evident his hand with chisel must have moved through the inspiration received by him from the supreme object of his adoration. Some of the works of these artists are of such excellence that we stand before them, our hearts aglow, for these divine works of art and the rare skill coupled with the devotion of the sculptor cannot but move us to wonder and admiration.

We watched the ways and habits of the people of Bangkok. They were in many respects similar to those of the people of Hongkong and Japan. Buddhism has left a stamp upon these people who are unconventional and free from the irksome distinctions and divisions formed by class and caste. Buddha's ideal was a society in which such distinctions are absent and all hearts are filled with compassion and inner illumination born of the release from the bondage of the flesh. All know Buddha was an Indian who was recognised by Hindus as an Avatar of God. He came at a time when India's Vedic religion had degraded to mere external rites and ceremonies breeding various kinds of evils and thereby creating confusion and misery among the people of the time. To wash away these evils and establish Dharma based upon truth, love, fair-play and righteousness, Buddha came. His mission was a unique one. His great enlightened personality was like the sun rising to dispel darkness.

CHAPTER XX

MALAYA

Singapore

We were now making ourselves ready to go to Singapore which was the next place of our visit. We had invitations also from Kuala Lumpur and Penang. These are in the Malay Peninsula. The plane took us to the Singapore airport where, on landing, we were welcomed by a large group of devotees. In this group there were mainly Tamilians and Gujaratis. We were comfortably lodged in the house of a Gujarati merchant, Sri Kanubhai M. Mehta. He and his family were extremely kind and hospitable to us. A big shamiana was erected in front of his house for Bhajan and other programmes. On the evening of the day we arrived, a meeting was held in this shamiana. A fairly large number of Hindus attended the function. At first Bhajan was performed by two parties—Tamilians and Gujaratis. We sat quietly listening to the sweet music glorifying God and His Name. When the Bhajan was closed Ramdas was asked by the friends to speak a few words to the assembled devotees. Ramdas spoke on Satsang and on the Divine Name.

Mahatma Gandhi's Greatness

Next day a meeting was held at the Gandhi Memorial Hall. It was a big hall and the number of people gathered there must have been over 500. Sri R. K. Tandon, Representative of the Government of India in Singapore, presided. Ramdas talked to the audience on the object of his tour. He also spoke a few words on Mahatma Gandhi in whose memory the hall was built. He said:

To love God is to love all

Mahatmaji was a lover of God and a lover of humanity. A man who says that he loves God and does not love his brethren, is a liar. If we really have faith in God and love God, we must love our fellow-beings. Otherwise we are not sincere in our love for God. Essentially Mahatma Gandhi was a spiritually illumined saint. His life fully bears this out. We can take so many lessons from his life. He taught us how we can purify ourselves in order that God may make us instruments to serve humanity. Selfless service alone counts. If any service is done to another out of selfishness that service is of no value. Real value comes to it when we do it selflessly. We can be selfless only when we have inner illumination. Through union with God we find light and joy within and when we are thus illumined we can really serve others without expecting anything in return.

Passing on to the problem of world peace Ramdas said:

Through the awareness of the Divine alone we can really bring true peace in the world. There is no doubt, considerable effort is being made by great leaders of the world on the material plane to bring about peace and harmony. But Ramdas does not see any sign of their success. The only way left for us is to turn our mind within ourselves and find out the true and everlasting basis or the supreme source from which alone we can get true happiness and peace in the world. That basis is God who is dwelling in the hearts of every one of us. He is the Universal Spirit.

Problem of Non-Vegetarianism

Some questions were put to Ramdas by the friends in the congregation, which was made up of various classes of people, among whom, Ramdas learnt later, there was a good sprinkling of Muslims and Parsis. The questions related to meat-eating.

Meat-eating is a great problem which engages the minds of spiritual seekers all over the world. It is true, food has a great bearing upon one's state of mind. We should avoid such food as would cause stimulation of the senses or irritation of the mind. Those who are on the spiritual path, therefore, avoid pungent, hot and stimulating foods and drinks of every kind. Meat is avoided by a certain class of seekers because it involves killing of animals. The principles of Ahimsa or non-violence have been the creed of Buddhism, Jainism, and in the present time Gandhism, if we may so call the essential truths of Gandhiji's teachings. Among Hindus there are various sects. Some of them are strict vegetarians and some others, according to their beliefs, are permitted to take meat. It is indeed true, as the saying goes, "It does not matter what goes into our mouth, but what comes out of it does."

When a spiritual aspirant, in his early days of discipline, struggles to bring his mind under control by eliminating from it all hankerings for the pleasures of the flesh, it is necessary that he should regulate his diet strictly. He takes the simplest food which does not cause undue disturbance in the mind, when he engages himself in prayer and meditation. In fact, in all manner of ways, the life of such an aspirant becomes extremely plain and simple. He reduces his wants to the minimum and lives a life of abstinence and renunciation. But when he advances on the path, and as his mind gets more and more collected, steady and tranquil, the rules of diet and other restrictions are relaxed. In some cases the strictness of discipline is maintained throughout the life of the seeker. even after he has found the peace of the immortal, and begins to play the role of a spiritual master to guide people in general. The followers of these great masters emphatically support the view that meat should never be taken on any consideration, and condemn people of the other classes who are given to meat-eating as their spiritual leaders had no objection to it.

A Matter of Necessity

There is thus a sharp conflict of opinion even among great souls on this question. If Ramdas is asked what his opinion on the matter is, he can only say that it is a matter of individual habit, temperament, convenience and necessity whether a man should eat meat or not. Although Ramdas, for himself, is not in favour of meat-eating, he does not, in any way, dislike a person who eats meat.

Now, by his going round the world and visiting many countries in which he met all classes of people, he found that a large majority of the population of the world is given to meat-eating. Even in countries like Japan, Hongkong, Thailand, Burma, Malaya and Ceylon, quite a considerable number of the followers of Buddha are taking meat as their natural article of food. Europe and America are, of course, the principal meat-eating countries. There are, here and there in Europe, societies formed with the sole object of changing the minds of people from meat-eating to vegetarianism on humanitarian ground. In the course of our wanderings we came in contact with many groups of spiritual seekers who were meat-eaters, but we found all the same that they were spiritually advanced and lived a life of purity, peace and charity. Here Ramdas may extract a reply that he gave to a question on the subject in Singapore:

Even plants have life

Are we not killing lives even if we are pure vegetarians? You must have heard of Dr. Bose who has found by experiments that everything in the world has life. Even vegetables have life and feeling. He showed by injecting a sugar solution to a plant, the plant manifested joy just like a man who was given some sweets. When he injected a kind of poison, the plant immediately started showing signs of agony as a man or animal would do before death, and gradually faded and died.

So we see clearly there is life in everything in the world and we cannot make out which to eat and which not to eat. We wonder where to draw a line of demarcation. We say we are at the head of creation. We must avoid massacring or killing, out of hate. Animals kill other animals for food, but human beings range themeselves against each other for waging wars out of hatred. If we stop these wars there will be so much misery averted and so much happiness created in this world.

We have in India the great problem of cow protection. But if we go to the households of Hindus, who profess to worship cows, we see how miserably they are kept. They are not taken proper care of. First let us look after the animals which are under our care and charge. In Europe and America people do not talk about vegetarianism. It may not be possible for them because they are used to taking meat as food. In Kashmir you will find even Brahmins are given to meat eating. Because of the cold weather, perhaps. You cannot have a hard and fast rule applicable to all people on this globe. It is a matter of habit, custom and need of the person.

The True Criterion

Ramdas may add God does not judge you by what you eat but by what you are; whether you are kind compassionate towards those who are in distress; whether your heart is free from selfishness and filled with pure love and devotion for Him; whether you are ready to serve your fellowbeings and love them like your nearest kith and kin; whether you are prepared to sacrifice yourself to the utmost for bringing relief, light and joy to the hearts of those who are afflicted. This is the criterion for judgeing whether a man is really a true servant of God who has realised Him.

A man may be a strict vegetarian, a punctual temple-goer, may praise God regularly every morning and evening may read the scriptures with all concentration, put on the signs and robes of a great believer of God. yet he may at heart be harbouring not good thoughts for his neighbours, may be utterly selfish, a slave of his lower passions, and an all-round inflictor of pain and misery upon others for the sake of gaining some material advantage for himself. God sees into our hearts and through our actions. Our heart must be in tune with love, and action flow from it in a spirit of selfless service. He is the true man of God who has no thought of himself, but ever has consideration for others and tries to make them happy, foregoing his own comforts and amenities.

There was a complaint at the meeting that the microphone through which Ramdas spoke to the assembly did not function well. However, the people who gathered there were happy because where we are united in the name of God, there is created always an atmosphere vibrating with divine peace and joy.

The following morning we went to see a garden containing bizarre painted wooden figures signifying some Chinese idols on which, it appeared, a rich man of the place had lavishly spent a lot of wealth. But the scenes we saw were altogether far from edifying. They would go only to amuse and entertain children who possess a queer and eccentric taste. Singapore presents to the world a multifaced picture of life and activity. All the nations of the world are represented in this populous and popular city. It has a picturesque harbour, besides being clean and neat in its appearance.

Ramakrishna Mission

The same evening we went to the local Sri Ramakrishna Mission where we met three Sannyasis. Swami Vitasokanandaji took the party to the beautiful shrine in the upstairs of the Mission main building which can be rightly called a temple. We saw here a fine statue of Sri Ramakrishna in marble, exactly resembling him. It looked as if Ramakrishna himself, having become smaller in stature, was sitting on the raised dais inside the temple. We went directly to the shrine and prostrated before Sri Ramakrishna's image. The Swamiji then took us round the other buildings connected with the Mission and explained to us the various activities carried on therein. We saw the school where orphan children were imparted education and also the boarding homes in which they were accommodated and fed. All the arrangements were made with great love and care on the part of the presiding Sannyasis. A great work of this nature can be done only by those who have dedicated their lives to God and humanity. Their love for children is pure and spontaneous and their minds are not fettered by worldly ties and attractions. They love God and love their fellow-beings. Any outstanding work for the good of the world can be possible only for such intrepid souls who have made service their sole aim and purpose in life. God is the one Master who can truly inspire a person with this spirit of utter dedication.

From the boarding home we were led by the Swamis to the hall below the shrine on the ground floor where usually lectures and discourses were held. The hall was full and on a raised platform Swami Vitasokanandaji and Ramdas sat near each other. The Swamiji spoke for some time on the attainment of Jnana or Moksha. His learned speech having ended, Ramdas was asked to speak. He did so for about three-quarters of an hour on Sri Ramakrishna, holding him up as the loftiest ideal of true devotion and self-surrender. Ramdas was carried away by the enthusiasm created in his heart by the contemplation, with all reverence, of Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna is a unique incarnation of Divinity. What he has done to the world at large cannot be explained in words, even by his admirer who is gifted with the highest intelligence. Such a one can only bow down before him, mentally visualizing his radiant figure. Seek not to understand or judge saints. They are only to be worshipped. The one hour we spent in the Ramakrishna Mission was an hour of eternal value, for we were filled with unusual rapture and joy.

Ramdas spoke of Sri Ramakrishna as an incarnation and dealt with his personal and impersonal aspects, describing the Sadhana which Ramakrishna practised. He said:

Be like children

Ramakrishna was the child of the Divine Mother. The Divine Mother is the Divine Shakti responsible for all manifestations and activities. That power is the one Deity to which we have to surrender ourselves completely, thus freeing ourselves from ego-sense. When we are free from it, we become child-like. To be child-like is not to be childish. We must be entirely free from lust, greed and wrath and the pairs of opposites of likes and dislikes. We must be pure in thought, word and deed. Our purity must be like that of the crystal. The idea of sex must be transcended and the distinction between man and woman must go. This is possible only when we do not see diversity, but perceive the whole world as the manifestation of the one universal Spirit.

At the close of the speech Ramdas was asked some questions. The questions and answers are given below:

By God's will

Q: Was there any special reason for the change in your life in 1922?

Ramdas: The only reason was that God's grace came to him. Everything happens by His grace and if we know this, then we will not have to search out for reasons for the things that happen.

Q: What made you start on this world tour?

Ramdas: The previous answer is the answer to this question also. By God's will Ramdas started on the tour. By

God's will he visited various places. By God's will he has come here and by God's will he is leaving this place for Kuala Lumpur tomorrow.

This answer evoked roars of laughter.

No conflict between Dwaita and Adwaita

Q: Why should there be conflicts between the Dwaitic and Adwaitic followers?

Ramdas: There should not be. Dwaita and Adwaita are only stages in our spiritual evolution. We start with Dwaita, then we reach Visishtadwaita and finally Adwaita. We can be one wtih God, we can be separate from Him, and we can be in Him and He in us. All these aspects belong to the same series of realization and we need not see any contradiction among the three. A devotee, although one with God, wants to remain a devotee to praise Him, sing of Him and enjoy Him.

Buddha, the Great Inspirer

The same evening there was another meeting at the Buddhist Union. In a well-ventilated and beautifully—built hall was installed a charming image of Lord Buddha. The hall was pervaded with the spirit of peace. Here lectures are delivered by saints and savants who are invited from time to time to speak. This time the audience was sparse as it was drizzling and the weather was inclement. The Buddhist friends who invited us were kind and courteous. After we were shown some pictures of great Buddhists connected with this institution, Ramdas was asked to take the chair, and before a microphone he delivered his discourse, while the people in the hall squatted on the floor. Ramdas spoke about Buddha.

Buddha was indeed one of the great inspirers of Ramdas when he was walking on the spiritual path. Buddha's teachings and influence have dominated over Ramdas' thought and life. Buddha is an incarnation of absolute purity, love and service. He was and still is a torchlight to humanity pointing the way that leads to perfect liberation from the bondage of Maya or illusion.

As he went on talking about Buddha, Ramdas felt that he was wafted to an exalted and sublime plane. Words flowed out of his mouth in an unending stream, recounting the glorious nature, qualities and attainments of Lord Buddha. Ramdas was talking not so much for anyone to hear him as for his own joy and ecstasy. Ramdas spoke of the vision he had of Lord Buddha's calm, serene and illumined face several years ago, and how it had left an abiding impression on Ramdas' heart. Buddha is indeed a great saviour and liberator and millions of people in several parts of the world look up to Him as their great leader and master. Ramdas closed his discourse saying, "So let us all be grateful to that great Avatar, Buddha, who came to the world for the redemption of mankind. May His grace ever pour on us and shine in our heart !"

Our next visit was to Sri Dandayudhapani Temple in which Lord Subramania is worshipped. We were welcomed here with the usual temple honours. It is managed by South Indians. The authorities got a special Pooja performed on the occasion. After a group prayer and distribution of Prasad we returned to Uttam Niwas, the house in which we resided. That evening there was again Bhajan in the shamiana in front of the house. Ramdas had to speak to the audience this time both in English and Hindi—Hindi for the benefit of the Gujarati ladies who did not know English. The principal persons who arranged the programmes here and guided and helped us in all manner of ways were Narasimhan, Krishnan, Uttam Ram and Kanubhai. Altogether our stay in Singapore was very joyful.

Kuala Lumpur

From Singapore we flew to Kuala Lumpur. It was only an hour's flight. We were directly taken by the devotees of the place to Vivekananda Ashram, at the entrance of which hundreds of devotees were waiting to welcome us. Ramdas sat in the big hall of the Ashram and all the devotees sat on carpets and mats. After the formalities of welcome and a short but thrilling Bhajan, Ramdas was asked to speak. Again, after an hour, in the same place there was a reception by the Divine Life Society, followed by Bhajan and a speech. We then went upstairs to the shrine where Pooja was performed by a priest. One rare thing we saw here was a cotton shirt which was worn by Swami Vivekananda. When the Poojari held it out before us, all the assembled devotees reverently touched it.

The same evening Ramdas went to the house of a devotee in Klang, about 25 miles from Kuala Lumpur. When he found Ramdas in his house, which he never expected, he was beside himself with joy, as also all members of his family. After the usual Padapooja and distribution of Prasad we returned to the hotel.

An hour later we went to the meeting held at the Vivekananda Tamil School. The function here was really a grand affair. The big hall was full to overflowing. Although it had been raining heavily for the last three days, that day particularly the sky was clear, enabling large crowds of people to attend the function and listen to Ramdas' talk without inconvenience. Here also Ramdas made a long speech which he concluded with the following words:

You are Satchidananda

Every one of you is the very embodiment of Divinity. Your true being is Sat-Chit-Ananda—absolute Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. You have forgotten about this truth. Therefore, remember it by taking the holy and powerful Name of the Reality until your mind disappears and you stand revealed as the Truth itself and enjoy as Ramdas has been enjoying that infinite bliss which never exhausts itself.

Next morning we again went to the same school. The children were filled with great enthusiasm and joy. They all came out of their classes and assembled on the plain in front for a group photograph, our party standing in the midst of them. It was a delightful sight to see children—boys and girls of various ages—gathered together with their hearts filled with love and devotion. Gladness was visible in their lustrous eyes.

From the school we went to the Selangor Buddhist temple where we met the Ven'ble Dhammananda. In fact, Ramdas paid a surprise visit to this temple as the monk was not informed of the exact time of Ramdas' visit. The monk was all love and affection.

One predominant feature in Ramdas' tour was that everywhere he was welcomed with sincere and unfeigned love and kindness by everyone whom he visited, whether the person be a monk, a householder, a professor, a devotee or a spiritual aspirant, of whatever creed, colour or country. This kind of uniformly loving treatment he received shows that God alone dwells in the hearts of all beings, and the love that was poured on him was from the inexhaustible source—God.

Next we paid a visit to the Shiva's temple at Sentul. The Batu caves were high up on a hill above 250 steps. We did not go up, but only looked at them from the foot of the hill.

The afternoon function in the Vivekananda Ashram that day was exclusively for children. About 60 children sat in front of Ramdas and chanted prayers and in all their innocence and bubbling enthusiasm, asked Ramdas to tell them some stories. Ramdas was also in a cheerful mood as he was unusually exhilarated. He gave out stories after stories to the delectation of the children who listened to them with rapt attention. He spoke in English and a friend of the place translated his talk into easy Tamil. He narrated the stories of Dhruva, Prahlada and Nachiketa, the child-bhaktas who had realised God by their simple and sincere prayers.

Shuddha Samajam

The same evening we went on invitation to the Shuddha Samajam, situated at a pretty great height on a hill. Swami Satyanandaji is the head of this Ashram. He is a disciple of Yogi Shuddhananda Bharati. So the Ashram is run in the latter's name. The Samajam building was very beautifully decorated. We had to climb up about fifty steps before we entered the building.

Swami Satyanandaji and hundreds of other devotees led us from the bottom of the hill up the steps to the Ashram. The hall was full of people belonging to various religions like Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Hinduism. After prayers and Bhajan, Ramdas was asked to deliver a message to the assembled devotees. Ramdas spoke on Universal Love and Brotherhood. He expressed delight in finding himself speaking in a hall which provides a common platform for the devotees of all the great religions of the world. He was also glad that the meeting was held in a spirit of universal brotherhood based upon the acceptance of one God as the God of all religions. He said in the course of his address:

Value of Collective Prayer

The united effort of us all should be utilized to pray to God in one voice. We shall thereby be releasing a force to produce harmony and peace. God's grace is necessary for us at this time. It is therefore important that we should join hands together to whatever country or race we belong. We must unite, love each other, and produce an atmosphere of goodwill and peace in the world, based upon the knowledge of the divine Spirit that pervades everywhere and controls all things.

We then went round seeing various other buildings in which orphans and helpless children were given free education, boarding and lodging.

Do not Fight in the Name of God

We returned to the City for attending a meeting at the Maha-mariamman Temple. The gathering here was extraordinarily big. Here Ramdas talked only of the Divine Mother and how we can become fit to receive Her infinite grace. Ramdas said:

We have gathered here tonight in the temple of the Divine Mother under Her benign protection and grace. Let us from this moment onward feel that we are all Her children and thereby love each other in the light of this knowledge, sinking all our differences. We find differences among religions. Followers of one religion say that their religion alone is true and all other religions are false. In the same religions, again, there are differences. Take for instance Hinduism in which there are many sects fighting with one another. Even people who worship the same God, say Shiva, are quarrelling among themselves on petty grounds. Among the Vaishnavites also there are acute differences and consequent clashes, each party saying 'this is my temple, this is my ashram and so on'—all quarrelling in the name of God, instead of uniting together. There is only one God who is the Father and Mother of us all and we are His children. In the name of such a God that we, His children, should fight among ourselves is indeed deplorable. Therefore, Ramdas' prayer to you all is that you should sink all differences, love each other, live harmoniously, go to each other's temple or Ashram, attain universal love and thereby feel God's presence within you and everywhere about you.

Then we went to another temple of Lord Subramania where, after worship and prayer, Ramdas spoke a few words advising those gathered there not to pray for material and perishable things which do not give them real happiness, but to pray to God only that He may lead them from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, and from death to Immortality. This was the last programme in Kuala Lumpur.

Among the devotees of Kuala Lumpur we have to make special mention of two, Sri M. Chinniah and Sri S. Boteju, who, along with a committee of members, were responsible for making suitable arrangements for our stay and also for preparing the programme. They saw to it that all the programmes were punctually carried out and they served the party with great love and devotion.

Penang: A Comedy of Errors

We left Kuala Lumpur next morning by air for Penang. There were many devotees at the airport to receive us. Some amusement was caused here by a rumour that Ramdas was coming with an American disciple named Rani Lalita Devi. As no American lady was found in the party, they were all surprised. They thought that Mataji was that lady, but it was disconcerting for them to find that Mataji did not speak English. It was all a comedy of errors. At first our host Sri D. Baboo was in sore perplexity, but when the actual facts became known to him, he laughed over it. There were such instances also in other parts of the world we visited. The Pressmen and other friends who casually met us were committing many ridiculous blunders about our individual status and relationship with each other. That such mistakes should happen was nothing unusual.

The first meeting at Penang was held in the local Gujarati school which was run on the upstairs of a huge building on the ground floor of which was a line of shops and business houses. A Gujarati friend, who met us at the airport, arranged for this function. There were a number of Gujarati men and women and also children present. After Bhajan, Ramdas talked here on "Devotion to God." He emphasized that a truly unselfish devotee alone can attain real peace and joy. So devotion for God should be perfectly free from any tinge of desire for earthly things. Devotion for devotion's sake, for knowing or seeing God, alone is true devotion.

That evening we had a meeting at the Theosophical Society which was located in the house of the President of the Society, Dr. C. H. Yeang. All the friends assembled there were members of the Society. Although the gathering was not a large one, the members were intently listening to Ramdas' discourse, and it was evident that they were all spiritual aspirants. At the end of the speech questions and answers followed, of which the following are some:

Renounce attachment

Q: Is it necessary to renounce the world to have the final state of realisation?

Ramdas: You have to renounce attachment to the world, but not the world. Nobody can renounce the world. Even if a man goes to the forest, the world is there with him.

Guru, not God, liberator

Q: Is it true the Guru comes to the aspirant automatically?

Ramdas: How you realise God is that you crave for Him and you long for somebody to take you out of the darkness so that you may remember God and realise Him. With this keen aspiration you pray to God for guidance. When this cry comes from the innermost core of your heart, the Guru comes to you, or you happen to go to the Guru. There must be hunger in your heart for getting somebody to guide you. Then God Himself comes in the form of the Guru to liberate you. It is said even God cannot grant Moksha, but only the Guru can. To give Moksha is the right of the Guru. God [illegible] you all material wealth and prosperity but not liberation.

Next day Ramdas had to address the Rotarians at their Club. As at St. Paul, the Rotarians here also met together once in a week as a social gathering when they had a formal talk, and then free conversation accompanied by a lunch. Our party had gone there after our lunch at Sri Baboo's place, and so we had only some cool drinks and biscuits. Ramdas spoke here for about ten minutes.

Ramakrishna Ashram and Orphanage

The same evening there was a huge gathering at the Ramakrishna Ashram and Orphanage in the open space before a thatched house, which provisionally accommodated the institution. Large clouds were hovering in the sky threatening a heavy shower any time. The people assembled were anxious for the success of the function, and God in His mysterious way dispersed the clouds. So we had bright weather when the proceedings started. Ramdas talked here also about Sri Ramakrishna, his unique love, devotion and surrender to the divine Mother. Then Ramdas dealt with the six forms of Bhakti. He concluded the speech with the following peroration:

> Therefore, whenever we go to temples or other places of worship, whether we sit for any practice of meditation, bhajan or japa, we must have in our mind only one thought or one desire, and that is to have the vision or Darshan of God—nothing else. This does not mean that we should give up worldly life, but our heart must be with God and we must do all actions with a view to achieve our goal of God-realisation.

Another meeting the same evening was held at the Hu Yew Seah School hall. It was a fine hall, well ventilated and lighted, but being in the thick of the town with busy thoroughfare all round, we had to put up with a lot of noise and disturbance. Here some Sikh friends came with Tabla and harmonium and sang soothing songs of Guru Nanak Dev.. After Bhajan, Ramdas spoke on God-realisation both in English and Hindi, the latter for the sake of those who knew only that language.

Next day we paid a round of visits to different temples, both Hindu and Buddhist. Everywhere we were welcomed and treated with love and devotion. Ramdas spent a longer period at the Sikh Gurudwara. The visit, not being pre-arranged, not more than half a dozen Sikhs were present. They held prayer and read the Holy Guru Granth Saheb. Then Ramdas spoke a few words in Hindi. The function concluded with the distribution of Prasad.

A God-given Privilege

One great advantage which Ramdas has been enjoying all through his life is that he can freely enter any house, temple, monastery or church, to whatever sect, creed or religion they might belong, wherein the Almighty is meditated upon, prayed to and worshipped, with or without images. This supreme privilege is granted to Ramdas because God does not will it that he should belong to any religion or religious association as such. He is simply the child of the universal God, the God of all nations and countries in the world. Every place of worship has an attraction for him and he goes into it with a heart full of devotion to the divine Master in whose name the spiritual institution is founded and conducted. God is indeed gracious in that Ramdas has been given this vision of looking upon the entire humanity as the manifestation of his supreme Beloved. Humanity is verily one huge form and image of God. The universe is He, in His form of Virat, and all beings, creatures and things are He. In fact. there is nothing and none but He.

Baboo and his wife are genuine devotees leading the householder's life. Both are spiritual aspirants of a very high order. Their joy knew no bounds when they learnt that we agreed to be their guests. Both husband and wife were all love and service to us. Practically the whole of their house was laid at our disposal. It was a nice, neat and well-ordered house, where the air was full of devotional fervour. During our stay there, every morning, a pretty large number of devotees of the place would throng into their small sitting room. Altogether the two days we spent with them was blissful.

A Child in Meditation

Dr. Yeang is another ardent and sincere aspirant whose life flows in the service of the ailing and distressed. His heart is with the poor. Really, it is not enough that we hold prayers, attend religious meetings, worship in temples, or do meditations, but it is essential that our life should express that inner faith and devotion to the supreme Lord of the universe in acts of charity and selfless service to those who are in need and trouble. Love, when it is real, cannot but inspire the person who possesses it to a life of unselfish and spontaneous dedication of all his energies for the uplift and happiness of the people at large.

Dr. Yeang is, as we have been told by many who had known him, a great force for good in Penang. We have been presented by him with a picture of his little son sitting in the pose of meditation. The picture is so lovely and represents very well the innocence and devotional spirit which are characteristic of a true devotee who meditates on God. It is obvious here that the child has taken after his parents, whose deep religious feeling is reflected on the face of the child.

We returned by air to Singapore, whence we flew to Colombo next morning. It has been calculated and noted down by Swami Satchidananda that since leaving Bombay we had to turn our watches back by 24 hours by the time we reached Colombo. Thus we completed one round of the globe.

CHAPTER XXI

CEYLON

Colombo

Ceylon, which is also known as Lanka, has a great historical importance. It was on this island that Ravana ruled. He was killed by Rama, because he was condemned and hated for his horrible crimes against the lovers and devotees of God. Sri Ramachandra, the great Avatar, of whom the reader must be familiar by the reading of Ramayana, was an ideal king, son, husband, brother, master and friend. He by entering Ceylon has consecrated the land by the touch of His holy footsteps. The story of Ramayana is well known.

For the last five or six years the devotees of Ceylon were very eager to have us with them. Year after year we had to postpone the journey owing to various reasons apparently, but really for the one reason that the time had not arrived for it as willed by the Divine. When Ceylon devotees heard that on our return from the world tour we would touch their Island and spend more than three weeks with them, it gave them no small joy and exultation. Our visit therefore created great excitement and enthusiasm in their hearts.

Sindhi Community Centre

At the airport a large number of devotees had assembled to give us a hearty welcome, led by Sir Kantiah Vaithyanathan and Sri K. Ramachandra. We were put up in a huge building, which goes by the name "Sindhi Community Centre", built by the Sindhi community to serve both as their temple and a place for holding religious and social functions and gatherings. We were received here by Sri Jiwatram Hridaramani, one of the prominent Sindhi merchants in Colombo. He took us upstairs to the shrine room where they have installed the holy Guru Granth Saheb on a raised pedestal, with a big framed picture of Guru Nanak Dev near it. It is well known that Guru Nanak Dev is the founder of the Sikh religion. Guru Nanak Dev was a great votary of God's name. After we offered our Pranams at the shrine, we were taken to the rooms allotted to us on the same floor, which had a wide open veranda facing the sea directly towards the west. The place was breezy and in every way comfortable.

When we were in Colombo we followed regularly the programmes drawn up for us by Sri K. Ramachandra, the leader of the devotees in Ceylon, who had high respect for him. We had known Sri Ramachandra for a long time as he had come to Anandashram three or four times. He was a silent worker, always inspiring his assistants to do all things in a regular, disciplined manner, himself always remaining behind the scenes.

The morning and evening Bhajans were held at the Sindhi Centre premises in the open veranda which could accommodate about 100 devotees. The Bhajans were sung by girls and young men with great devotional joy and fervour. All the visitors would sit peaceful and serene, lost in the divine rapture. The one hour thus spent in morning and evening prayers stands out as the most inspiring period in the daily programme.

Our Sindhi host was all kindness and hospitality. He was loving and devout and did all acts of service in perfect humility and cheerfulness. His face used to be suffused with smiles. Our young friends, Sundaralingam and Visagaperuman, were in constant attendance on us, supplying all our needs. In short, we can say that for the devotees of Colombo the building became, during our stay there, the seat of loving and tireless service. In the afternoon Ramdas used to answer the questions of friends, in the beginning about twenty to thirty strong, who would come to meet him here. When the questions were put in a lighter vein, Ramdas dealt with them in an equally humorous strain. So we used to have a good deal of laughter. The attendance at these meetings grew larger and larger day by day.

Cast all Responsibity on God

Among the questions put to him there was one relating to the way an Ashram should be conducted. Ramdas replied to it as follows:

> It is not easy to manage an Ashram. You have to face so many problems, and some of them are so difficult that you do not know how to deal with them. At this time, only God must be appealed for giving you the right cue for solving them. Man is a bungler by nature and when he finds himself in a deep mess, it is then that he sues God to come to his rescue, and God, who is all love and compassion, frees him from the predicament. This game is going on all over the world, for all people alike. Man, puny, conceited man, thinks he is clever and can get on without God, but failure and frustration hit him so hard that, willy nilly, he has to turn to God for help and refuge. It is well for us, in the very first instance, knowing His sovereignty over everything, to give up our pride, seek His shelter, submit to His will and live humbly as His servants. The real way is not to assume responsibility ourselves, but to know that it rests upon God and thereby get things done by Him for us. Acting on the above principles, the management of an Ashram becomes easy.

Invariably, in the evenings the Bhajans and meetings were held at different places. Here the devotees assembled sang Bhajans before Ramdas delivered his speech which was translated into Tamil by Sri Ramachandra or some other friend. The meetings were attended by huge crowds of people who were spiritually inclined.

The Message of the Rishis

The first visit in Colombo was to the Ramakrishna Mission, Wellawatte, of which Sri Swami Prematmananda was the President. The devotees gathered in the main hall of the building. Here Ramdas gave a talk, in the course of which he said:

> God has definitely told us that He is seated in the hearts of all beings and forms. Whenever we see any form, we must see not only the external form, but also the indwelling Reality. This is the true vision which liberates us from the sense of diversity and makes us realise the oneness of all existence. This is the message of the Rishis. It is not merely in particular holy places and solitudes that we should have this vision, but even in the market place and the bazaar we should be able

to maintain the consciouness of unity in diversity. We must feel the divine presence always about us.

In his speech Ramdas drew many instances from the life of Sri Ramakrishna to show what true self-surrender meant. Sri Ramakrishna was verily the embodiment of a totally consecrated life to the Divine Mother. He was so saturated with devotion for Her that he ultimately became the very form and image of the Mother. Truly, what one intensely thinks of and meditates upon, that one becomes. Swami Prematmananda and the other Sannyasis of the Mission were courteous, kind and good to us.

Buddhist Temple, Kalaniya

Our second visit after we reached Ceylon was to an old Buddhist temple at Kalaniya, five miles from Colombo, which was built as far back as the second century B.C. The Buddha is said to have visited this place on a Vaisak Purnima day. To commemorate the Lord's visit, the Naga king of the time built the dagoba in the third century BC. We saw a fine marble statue of Buddha in the Sanctum inside the temple and on the sides huge statues of Buddha in standing posture. Our friend, Sri Laksman Wijewardene, a Buddhist, arranged the visit and accompanied us there. The temple was recently renovated by the Wijewardene family. When we were inside the temple, we sat in meditation for a few minutes in front of the marble image, and felt great peace.

The next gathering was at the Vivekananda Society Hall where, after Bhajan, Ramdas spoke on "Guru and Guru-Bhakti." Ramdas gives here an extract from the discourse. He said:

Contact with Saints Saves

The contact of great souls who have realised God is essential for your salvation. If you are a real seeker of God, then surely you will come in contact with such a great saint. When you get his contact, you must feel that you are not only blessed, but you are also saved..... A realised soul alone can kindle another soul. Going to temples alone will not do. Reading books alone will not do. Our aspiration must lead us to the feet of the Guru or bring the Guru to us and liberate us. Therefore, it is a tradition in India that we should submit ourselves to the influence of a divine personality.

The Gospel of the Gita

Another day Ramdas was invited to the Hindu College where a meeting was held under the auspices of the Hindu Association of Ceylon. It happened to be the Gita Jayanti day. Appropriate to the occasion, Ramdas spoke here on the Bhagavad Gita. He dealt with the Gita dividing it into three sections, the first treating of Jnana, the second of Bhakti, and the third of Karma. Summing up the gospel of the Gita, Ramdas said:

Do not run away from work

The Gita teaches us that we should not run away from the activity allotted to us by the Divine. We must do such actions without the ego-sense. We must become instruments in the hands of the divine Shakti and cheerfully and willingly do everything without being affected by such actions. We have nothing to do with the results of our actions. We are simply to act at the command of the Divine Power and remain at the same time as the unaffected witness.

Glory of the Divine Mother

Next day in the morning we went to the Saiva Mangayar Kalagam, Wellawatte. The function, held at their school hall, was intended only for ladies and children. Ramdas sat before a galaxy of mothers and children who were dressed in multi-coloured sarees and frocks, presenting a variegated scene of unusual fascination. Verily, he saw the Divine Mother Herself as having assumed all these forms, seated before Her child, who has been brought here to speak a few words about Her.

Naturally, the subject Ramdas chose for his speech was "Surrender to the Divine Mother." He introduced himself to the audience as a child of that supreme Mother. Ramdas was in an ecstatic mood and went on talking, almost breathlessly, about the love and adoration which he bore for the Divine Mother. He spoke of that supreme Mother as having become the entire universe and all beings and creatures in it. Her glories are infinite and Her power is omnipotent.

The teachers, the Head Mistress and the Principal were all overjoyed to have Ramdas in their midst. After the function was over we were shown round the school buildings. Then we also met the other younger children who were waiting for us outside, as there was no room for them inside the hall which was overcrowded during the function. These little ones were in a jubilant mood and Ramdas felt like one of them and moved about in their company as a child of their age.

Saguna Upasana

The same evening we were received with great love and devotion at the Sri Siva Subramania temple. After worship and Bhajan, Ramdas spoke to the devotees present about Saguna Upasana or worship of personal God. Here again Ramdas gives a brief summary of the speech he delivered there:

> We all know that God is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. As such, it is difficult for us to approach Him unless He assumes a human form. So He has assumed for our sake a Saguna Swarupa or personal form with divine qualities. He is worshipped in thousands of temples all over India and Ceylon in particular forms or images. In these temples the supreme Lord is worshipped in the form of an idol. So these images are not merely, as you see, made of metal or stone. They are the very personifications of the Divine, full of splendour, power and joy. Therefore, His Darshan means to behold Him in the entire universe. Of course, before He grants us this Nirguna Darshan or vision of the formless, attributeless Brahman, He grants us Saguna Darshan.

Initiation to Lepers

One evening Mataji, Ramdas and party were taken to the Leprosy Hospital at Hendala. There was a time when Ramdas, as commanded by God, served a few lepers in Mangalore while he was staying there in the Kadri cave. The suffering of the lepers had touched Ramdas' heart deeply, and like an obedient servant of the Master, he used to collect food from three or four houses at His behest and going to a plain, where the lepers were residing under the shade of huge banyan trees, feed them. This scene is still vivid in Ramdas' mind. Ramdas served the lepers looking upon them as the veritable forms of his Beloved Ram. The ecstasy born of this service was simply indescribable. When we were told that we were going to see the Leprosy Hospital, Ramdas' heart thrilled with a mysterious feeling of anticipation.

We were taken before the patients who had gathered in one of the verandas of the hospital building. The lepers had beautifully decorated the place for our reception. We could feel how greatly elated these suffering ones were when we approached the building. This was evident from the way they were running here and there with their faces lit up with smiles. Mataji and Ramdas sat on chairs placed before the lepers, who were squatting on the floor. Ramdas spoke to them a few words of consolation, giving them the advice that no condition can be miserable for us when we are constantly in communion with God. Physical health alone cannot contribute to our happiness, but only a constant tuning of our mind with God can make us truly peaceful and joyous. Diseases are cured not so much by medicine as by God's grace. So Ramdas exhorted them to pray to God, take His holy name and have His remembrance stamped on their minds. Ramdas' speech was translated into Tamil by Sri Haran, Editor of *Veerakesari*, a Tamil daily of Colombo. As they heard Ramdas, they were visibly moved and were looking at each other with an unusual feeling of love and delight.

At the end of the talk Mataji suggested that Ramdas should initiate them with some Mantra. The question was put to them as to which Mantra they would prefer. In almost one voice they said they wanted Muruga Mantra. Accordingly, Ramdas initiated them with this Mantra, making them repeat three times: 'Muruga', 'Muruga', 'Muruga'. When they got the Mantra, their joy knew no bounds. They clapped their hands, most of the fingers of which were eaten away by the fell disease, in a state of uncontrollable ecstasy. It was indeed a great day for them, a day of divine light and peace.

On another day the evening prayer meeting was held at the Sindhi Community Centre itself. Ramdas spoke on Self-surrender on the occasion. Self-surrender connotes complete dedication of all that we are and have to the supreme Lord of the universe and thereby we become entirely His own. This surrender gives us immediate release from the bondage of action, flooding our entire manifest being with light and joy divine. For us, thereafter, the whole world is the expression of our eternal Beloved. It is a vision and experience which cannot be comprehended by the intellect, much less expressed in the words of human language, as in the Bhagawad Gita it is said that He, the supreme Being, is Achintya Rupa, the unthinkable Reality.

A Veritable Vaikunta

We had invitations for Bhajans and talks at several centres in Colombo in addition to those mentioned above. Ramdas is giving here only an account of a few outstanding ones. One day Sri K. Ramachandra invited us to his house, where he arranged for a programme of Bhajan and evening meal. The hall was full of devotees. Here Bhajan was sweetly sung by his daughters who have a special gift for music. The function was altogether a most blissful one. Ramachandra, his wife and children vied with each other in offering us their wholehearted love and hospitality. Blessed is the house of a devotee where God's names are sung every day and service is rendered to saints jointly by all the members residing in it. Such a house is rightly called by devotees and saints as a veritable Vaikunta.

At Kollupitiya we had a meeting one evening in the Town Hall. At this place Ramdas spoke, after Bhajan, on "Devotion to God." If at all we wish to offer our devotion to anybody, it ought to be only to God.

All Mantras speak of One God

Next morning Ramdas visited the Ramakrishna Mission for the second time to attend the special meeting convened for the sake of the children who used to come to the Ashram to attend religious classes conducted by some devoted honorary teachers of both sexes. There are over a hundred children who attend these classes in which are taught the fundamentals of all religions. They all assembled in the big hall and sat on the floor in a jovial mood. After a short Bhajan one of the devotees suggested that Ramdas should chant God's name before the children.

Ramdas then asked the little ones what name they liked best. Some wanted Ramdas to chant "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram," some others wanted the name "Muruga," while still others the Mantra "Om Namah Shivaya." Ramdas chanted all the three Mantras and made the children sing them in chorus. There was great joy and elation when these young and innocent hearts sang with all devotion the sweet and glorious Names of God. Ramdas told them that all names are Mantras of one God,—Rama, Shiva and Muruga. They are all names of the one supreme Being and therefore they should not see any difference between them.

The same evening there was a meeting in the Vivekananda Society Hall under the auspices of the Rama Gana Sabha. Here Ramdas spoke for about three quarters of an hour on Saguna Upasana, worship of God in His personal aspect.

Next day Ramdas was invited to declare open the new hall of the Hindu College, Bambalapitiya, and to name it "Saraswati Hall." There was a fairly large gathering of devotees. After Bhajan Ramdas spoke a few words on the importance of the right kind of Vidya or learning. He said:

Education of the heart

You know that there are, as it is said by our ancient teachers and saints, three kinds of gifts. One is the gift of devotion, the second of education and the third of food. Education is an important aid in the evolution of human life. Without education we cannot grow in the right way so that we can regulate our lives and make ourselves useful to others. Without culture we cannot prove ourselves to be useful to our fellow-beings. We should expect that institutions like this should give education not only for the advancement of the intellect, but also for the enlargement of the heart.

Clash of Ideologies

A religious grounding is essential for imparting education in schools. Without a religious background life is prone to be irregular and chaotic, which is like building a house without a firm foundation. The nations of the world are now at daggers drawn with one another because they have not discovered the underlying principle that governs the lives of all beings in the world. This principle is God who is the universal Spirit dwelling in the hearts of all of us. It is by the knowledge of this Spirit that we have to live together harmoniously and mutually love and help each other. Instead of this, owing to our isolated and separatist policies, we are now trying to exploit, conquer and possess each other's countries.

Man, nowadays, is not ruled by the Divine within him, but by an ideology which he fondly imagines would bring peace and goodwill in the world, if adopted by all nations. So there is an unhealthy propaganda, competition, rivalry and destructive clash of ideologies. The parties forget that God is the one supreme ideal. In the light of our experience of Him alone we can join hands as brothers, work together for the common well-being and be instrumental in fulfilling His will in the world. This is the only effective way to bring about co-operation, harmony and peace.

The last meeting during this stay in Colombo was in the Sindhi Centre. After Bhajan, Ramdas spoke a few words to the devotees who had assembled in the beautiful hall. He emphasized the need for everyone to take God's name constantly. God's name is the saviour, and he who has faith in it is sure to be free from the clutches of Maya and blessed with the highest spiritual experience, namely, the vision and realisation of God.

Jaffna

We left Colombo for Jaffna by express train in the evening. Early next morning we reached Jaffna and were welcomed at the Railway station by the leading officials and citizens of the town with all love and devotion. We were lodged at the local Ramakrishna Mission Vaitheeswara Vidyalaya.

In the evening that day we attended the Bhajan and meeting held in the Vidyalaya hall. Ramdas spoke on this occasion about the purpose of the tour. Then he dealt with the basic unity of all religions and the importance of the repetition of God's name. He stressed on the need to awaken the consciousness of human life and existence. He concluded by saying:

Think in terms of the Universal

In order to dwell in this consciousness, think always not in terms of the individual, but in terms of the universal. Do all things only for the sake of God. If you do this, gradually your ego-sense will disappear and you will realise that you are the universal Spirit—changeless, eternal and infinite. This is the goal which you have to achieve.

Next day we visited the Civil Hospital and Sanatorium at Kankesanturai about twelve miles from Jaffna. For our reception. the patients of the hospital had made elaborate decorations. They had assembled in large numbers and they greeted us with unfeigned yoy. Ramdas was directly taken on arrival to a raised platform. The doctors, the patients and the visitors, all crowded round him. After a short Bhajan, Ramdas talked for a while, in the course of which he said:

Cure for all diseases

In this world of change we meet with various vicissitudes of life, both pleasant and unpleasant. We are afflicted with diseases both mental and physical. The body is stricken with diseases and the mind filled with worries. In this state of our unhappiness, turmoil and misery, there is only one way and that is to take refuge in God. God alone can remove our difficulties and diseases and bring us health, peace and prosperity.

Ramdas was then taken to the Sanatorium temple of Lord Muruga. It was a small structure, neatly kept and the pooja service was carried on every day with great faith and devotion. The patients of the hospital must indeed be deriving great spiritual solace by attending the prayers and worship in this temple.

Dynamics of the Spirit

Religion should enter into every department of our life. It is the cry nowadays that our life must be moulded purely on a secular ideal. This means we should appraise the values of life ignoring the soul. But man is not merely what he appears to be, a bundle of flesh, bones, blood and skin, and a creature living and acting under the impulses, feelings and thoughts arising from the mind. We have to recognise that beyond these exterior dynamics of the mind and body, there is within us a Spirit which is immortal, and it is by the power and guidance of this Spirit that our life should be active in its varied expressions. So in the classroom, hospital, office, market-place, factory and fields, no less than in temples, churches, mosques and monasteries, we should tune ourselves with this Spirit and divine thoughts and feelings should permeate us equally. If we fail to do so, we create nothing but ill-will, strife, jealousy and hate with the consequent confusion and disorder in society.

In the absence of God-thought we feel so exclusive and cut off from our fellow-beings that we believe we are merely individuals and that we should live only to fulfil our individual longings and desires for our own physical pleasure and comfort. The ideal on the other hand is that our life should be lived out for the sake of others, as naturally as a tree which gives itself away in all aspects of its existence to those who wish to derive benefit from it. In other words, our life is intended for the service of all. This mode of life, this expression of our innate divine nature, this expansion of the self into the Universal for attaining perfect liberation and peace, can be possible only when God-thought rules our mind, God-love fills our heart, and God's will governs our action making it spontaneously flow from us.

Ramdas visited also the Women's College where we were warmly welcomed by the Principal, staff and students. In the course of his speech, he prayed God Almightly to shower His choicest blessings on all of them and grant them one-pointed devotion to Him, as such devotion alone will enable them to realise Him in their own hearts and behold Him as the entire universe.

The evening prayer meeting was held at the Perumal Kovil. After pooja all devotees sat for Bhajan in the outer yard of the temple. Here Ramdas spoke on Bhakti, in the course of which he said:

Value of Image Worship

> There is nothing wrong or unnatural for the devotee to worship an image looking upon it as the very form of God. When you, with one-pointed devotion, worship the image, you will find gradually that God represented by the image takes His seat in your heart and possesses it so completely that you will have no other thought and no other activity than those concerned with Him and for His sake. Your whole life will be one of sacrifice and dedication to Him and will flow out in service to Him. You will be filled with rare bliss and peace.

Next day Ramdas was invited to the Tirunelveli Young Men's Hindu Association where, after Bhajan, he gave a short speech on "True Devotion to God." Stressing the importance of the Name he said:

A link with God

> A great saint has said that he who has got God's name on his lips is a Jivan-mukta, because continuous remembrance of God eliminates the ego-sense and grants him the realisation of his immortal, changeless Self. Name is a link between the devotee and God. It brings the devotee face to face with God and enables him to attain the knowledge of his oneness with Him.

That evening again Ramdas delivered a discourse on "God-realisation" at the meeting held in the Town Hall under the auspices of the Hindu Sanmarga Sangham. Concluding the speech Ramdas said:

> Ramdas feels certain that these words of his will go deep down into your hearts and awaken you to the awareness of the Divine. You are all verily the embodiments of God, because God dwells within you, and so it is easy for you to remember Him, feel conscious of Him and thereafter live, move and have your being in Him.

During our stay in Jaffna we were invited to several houses for our meals by friends, of whom Dr. C. Guruswamy and Sri M. Srikantha were two. Sri S. Ambikapakan, the Principal of the Vaitheeswara Vidyalaya was very kind to us. He arranged our programmes and all along was extremely helpful to us in carrying them out.

Anuradhapura

We left for Anuradhapura after three days' stay in Jaffna. Anuradhapura is a place of historical importance, because it was the seat of the Government of about ninety kings who once ruled over Ceylon. There can be seen even now the royal palaces and also many temples in ruins. Our short stay did not admit of our going out to see these monuments. We had a meeting here in the evening in the Vivekananda Society. After the usual Bhajan, Ramdas spoke on "The Aim of Human Life". Towards the end of the speech he said:

Saints' mission in the world

Love and devotion for God can spring in our heart only through the contact of saints. It is they who infuse in us faith in God and inspire us to take His holy Name. They are more gracious, loving and kind to us than our earthly father and mother, who are concerned only about our physical welfare. But the saints are more eager to see that we are liberated from the thraldom of Karma and attain the supreme goal—God. That is, they are concerned more with our spiritual welfare. Their mission in this world is to awaken the slumbering souls from ignorance and take them towards the Divine and make their lives blessed. Therefore, we have to contact saints, get inspiration from them, take God's name constantly, live a pure life and ultimately find God within us and behold Him everywhere in the universe. When we behold God everywhere, our life will be filled with divine bliss and peace. If we achieve this goal we will have used this precious gift of human life to the best account. Therefore, in conclusion Ramdas advises you to have pure devotion for God, think of Him, finally realise Him, and make your life blessed.

Trincomalee

After only a day's stay at Anuradhapura we proceeded to Trincomalee, where we were the guests of Sri R. Ratnasingham. A prayer meeting was held the same evening at the Ramakrishna Mission Hindu College.

Ramdas spoke here after Bhajan on "How to Become True Devotees and Servants of God." He said:

Teachings of World Prophets

We must look upon all beings in the world as our brothers and sisters. All man-made distinctions based upon religion, caste, creed, colour and nationality must disappear. God of all people, of all nations and all religions, is one and the same. We are His children. Recognize Him in this relationship and love each other. The great teachers of the world taught us the same way. Buddha taught us that we should purify ourselves and have compassion towards all living creatures. Jesus Christ asked us to love all beings as we love ourselves. Krishna taught us to see the Divine in each and everybody in the world. Prophet Mohammed taught us to submit to the will of God and become His instruments so that we can carry out His will in the world. If we only follow the teachings of these great spiritual masters, we have no reason to quarrel among ourselves on any account.

Next morning, after the prayer meeting at Ratnasingham's house, we went to the Swami Malai temple on the sea-coast. This temple is situated on a high rock facing the ocean. It was a charming spot, commanding an extensive view of the sea and the surrounding hills. We entered the temple and after witnessing the worship there, went to the rock at the edge of the sea, where also we saw the pooja performed by the priests. It was indeed a holy place and the solemnity of the pooja was such that all the devotees who had gathered there were filled with unusual devotional fervour.

Sivananda Tapovan

In the evening we visited the Divine Life Society Sivananda Tapovan, an institution recently started and managed by Swami Sivananda-Satchidananda, a sannyasini disciple of Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh. The weather was cloudy portending heavy rainfall. Ramdas was first asked to open a small Ayurvedic Dispensary in a thatched hut. He went inside and found the place quite neat. There was Bhajan and Arati before the photograph of Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati. The Ayurvedic physician and his wife were enthusiastic in their anticipation of serving the patients with love and care. It was altogether a very edifying sight.

The rains now started. The hall where the meeting was held was not closed on two sides, the roof standing on pillars wide apart from each other. This allowed freely the rain water to rush in. The rain was accompanied also by furious winds. When we took our seat on the raised platform, we had a good shower-bath. After some arrangements were made to prevent the rain from dashing on us, the function started with the usual Pada-puja and Bhajan. Then Ramdas was asked to speak. He spoke about the relationship of a disciple with his Guru. He dissected this relationship and discussed it threadbare, giving advice to those who honour the Guru outwardly, but do not live up to his expectations of acting according to his instructions in their day-to-day life. Ramdas is giving here some important extracts from it:

Disciples' duty to Gurus

The Guru's heart is so soft that he is always eager that all those who have taken refuge in him are made free from their lower nature and perfectly happy, both inwardly and outwardly. He is pouring his grace in abundance on his devotees and tirelessly instructing them as to how they should live and act in order to have the vision of Divinity within and without. It is not enough if they simply say they are the disciples of such and such a saint. They must follow his teachings. Guru's grace can flow into them only if they carry out his words and thus please him. But, unfortunately, we are today a different picture. Often we doubt whether we are right in calling ourselves the devotees of a great saint. Still we take pride in doing so, when we have not developed an iota of the lofty qualities we should cultivate by our contact with the illumined personality of the Guru. Our duty therefore is to obey implicitly the advice of the Guru and act up to it. We thereby cleanse ourselves of all our impurities and make ourselves fit to realize the Divine within us and achieve immortality.

Our return drive from this Ashram was somewhat exciting. It was raining heavily and the provisional road newly made to approach the Ashram soon became muddy. The car in which we sat got stuck up in the mud and had to be pulled out by a dozen strong men. It was all hard work but accompanied with considerable merriment.

Batticaloa

Next day after passing through Polonnaruwa we reached Batticaloa. Here we were the guests of a solicitor friend, Sri K. V. M. Subramaniam. The following day there was a function in the Vivekananda Vidyalaya where, after Bhajan, Ramdas talked on "Self-surrender." He said:

Actions and events are themselves neither good nor bad. We take certain situations as for our good and we are happy. At other times we consider certain situations as bad and we are unhappy. When we know that all things happen by the will of the divine Being who is all love and compassion, we shall be always contented and happy. In this state of contentment and peace, as a result of complete surrender to His will, our life will flow out in selfless service to all.

We were taken in the evening in a procession through the streets of Batticaloa to the Town Hall, where Ramdas spoke on "The object of Human Life." In the course of the speech Ramdas said:

God is the Universal Spirit

God is really without name or form. He is universal consciousness, Spirit or Truth. He may be called by any name which you hold dear. Muslims call Him Allah; Hindus call Him Rama, Krishna or Shiva; Christians call Him Jehovah or Jesus; Buddhists call the highest as Nirvana. If the devotee of any one of these teachers is true to God, he will keep His Name constantly on his lips and attune his life with the divine life. All differences that are prevailing now will disappear if this is understood and observed by all. Each religion will respect the other religions. By that we shall be able to create the much-needed world brotherhood.

Without knowing that the sole purpose of his life is to realise God, man is clinging to lesser aims and spends his whole life in fulfilling them. If, giving up the thought of God, he pursues the ephemeral pleasures, he is simply wasting away his precious life. By forgetting God, he gets caught in the toils of Maya and leads a care-worn, hectic and chaotic life. If he wishes to have harmony, peace and joy, he should devote his life for God and God alone.

Lepers given Ganesh Mantra

Another day we visited a Leper Hospital at Mantivu, a small island. About seven or eight of us crossed the sea by a boat with the cool breeze blowing over us. It was God's wish that we should have something like a boating trip after the life in a busy city. We reached the island and the leaders of our party took us to the building facing the sea where the doctors have their offices and consulting rooms. All the lepers of that colony were standing in two rows, and we walked up the path between them. We could see in their faces a bright smile which was a sign of their welcome to us. They considered our visit to them as an event of such great importance that they celebrated it with fireworks. After stopping for a few minutes in this building, we were led to the temple of Ganesha about two hundred yards in the interior, where the patients also followed us. Ramdas gave here a brief talk to the assembled patients, at the end of which, at their request, he initiated them all with Ganesh Mantra.

Akkarapattu and Kalmunai

One evening we went to Akkarapattu, where a teacher of the Ramakrishna Mission School, Sri K. Natarajan, who was at once its founder and head-master. had arranged a function. Ramdas spoke here on "Bhakti", freely quoting from the Paramahamsa's teachings. He said:

Bhakta becomes Bhagawan

The object of devotion should be to realise God in our heart and allow Him to fill all parts of our being with His light and power. This done, our hearts will be overflowing with divine love towards all beings in the world. Our eyes will see only God everywhere. Our hands will work only for the good of everybody and we will ultimately become the very embodiments of God, filled with bliss and ever surcharged with ecstasy. In this state, the difference between the Bhakta and Bhagawan will disappear. The Bhakta, by constant remembrance of and surrender to God, becomes God himself. So when you constantly think of God, you become His very image. Then it is you enjoy immortal joy and peace.

On return from this place we halted for the night at Kalmunai at the house of an Excutive Engineer, Sri A. Sambasivam. He and his wife were very kind and hospitable to us. His wife had heard of Mataji and Ramdas through Sri K. Ramachandra, read Ramdas' books and was worshipping his and Mataji's photographs. She was overflowing with joy to find us as guests in her house. God's ways are wonderful. He takes us to such places where there is love and devotion for Him. Next morning we went to the Ramakrishna Mission School, where Ramdas delivered a discourse on the greatness of God's name. He said:

Devotion is Bliss

By doing Sadhana it does not mean that we are going to get happiness or Moksha only after we are dead, or at a later date. The very act of devotion to God and the consequent union with Him grants us bliss from moment to moment. The instant we step on the path of devotion and take His Name with all love and faith we get pure joy and peace. Therefore, those who know the power of the Name say that it is sweeter than nectar.

Krishnabai Ladies' League

In the evening we went from Kalmunai to Kalladi Uppodai, a place near Batticaloa. Here the public were so enthusiastic about our arrival that they took us in a grand procession along the streets with Nadaswaram music. All the houses on the road-side were gaily decorated and lights, flowers, coconuts and incense sticks were placed at their entrances. It took over an hour for us to reach the Vivekananda Vidyalaya where the meeting was to be held. Sri Swami Natarajananda, the General Manager of all Ramakrishna Mission schools in Ceylon, was already there to welcome us. After Bhajan, addresses were read in English and Tamil. Ramdas spoke here on "Devotion." Some prominent ladies of the place also gave loving expression to their deep feelings over our visit. Among them one lady announced about the starting of a new Ladies' League, which they had named Krishnabai Ladies' League. Practically they started the League in honour of the visit of Mataji to their place. The object of the organisation, as explained by the lady who announced about it, was selfless service of the helpless, poor and suffering. This laudable aim would surely be fulfilled by the blessings of God. We wished it all success.

Badulla

We returned to Batticaloa late in the evening. Next morning we left that place for Badulla by car. As our cars gradually ascended the curved roads which led to higher altitudes, we witnessed on two sides deep valleys and high mountains all covered with tea shrubs. Vast tea estates were visible wherever we cast our eyes. We were reminded of our trips from Mysore to Mercara and from Mysore to Ooty. We went higher and higher up and reached Badulla. The curves and bends we had to negotiate in our journey were not a pleasant experience to some of the party. Here we were the guests of Sri C. Kanagaratnam. A Bhajan and meeting programme was arranged in the local College hall.

Pure and Impure Forms of Buddhism

Before we started for the college, a Buddhist monk named Bhikku Jnana Satta, a Czechoslovakian, came to see Ramdas. He said that he had heard about Ramdas' visit and wanted to talk to him for a short while. In the course of the conversation, which covered the main events in the life of Buddha, Ramdas asked him whether it was true that, as a result of some soup given to Buddha when he was resting under a tree, he became ill and passed away. Ramdas also expressed his view that the soup was not of pork, as wrongly stated by European writers in their translation of the Lord's life from the original Pali text, but that it was the soup of a poisonous variety of mushroom. The monk agreed with Ramdas in thinking that it was not pork but mushroom soup. Then Ramdas asked him how it was that in Japan, Burma, Bangkok and, may be, also in Ceylon, the Buddhists were given to meat-eating, while Buddha stood for absolute Ahimsa. That was the Dharma he preached during his lifetime and the message conveyed by his disciples to several parts of the eastern hemisphere.

A Possible Explanation

The monk replied that the Japanese, Chinese and Burmese Buddhists are not practising real Buddhism, but a mixture of Buddhism with a decadent Hinduism. Soon after the disciples of Buddha preached his gospel in Japan, China and other neighbouring countries and returned to India, some of the enthusiasts among the followers of Buddha from these countries came to India to take with them the scriptures which contained the message of Buddha. Instead of taking only the Buddhist scriptures, they also got some books which contained certain teachings of a decadent Hinduism. This they may have done by mistake. Whatever it be, they and their countrymen believed that these teachings too were of Buddha and started practising them. Hence pure Buddhism is not generally practised in Japan and other places. Whatever may be the truth of this explanation, the forms of worship adopted by the so-called Buddhists of Japan, China, Burma and other places are, indeed, highly distorted and perverted expressions of the great and pure teachings of Lord Buddha.

As Ramdas has already mentioned, there is a certain class of Buddhists in Japan who practise pure Buddhism, known as Zen Buddhism. They say they derive inspiration directly from the Bodhisattwa—the original principle or essence of Truth which has manifested itself from time to time as Buddhas for guiding humanity to the goal of Nirvana. The impure form of Buddhism prevalent in Japan and other places has nothing to do with this revival of pure Buddhism.

In the College hall the meeting was held under the auspices of the Saiva Paripalana Sangham. Here Ramdas spoke on "Divine Love." He held that Love is the greatest principle we should practise in our daily life. In expounding the various aspects of love Ramdas was carried away by the subject to such an extent that a continuous flow of words issued from him, and the entire audience sat still listening to him. The monk, Bhikkhu Jnana Satta, was also sitting by Ramdas' side on the rostrum. After Ramdas' speech was over, the monk translated the speech to that part of the audience which did not know English or Tamil in fluent Sinhalese. We could not understand his speech, but we noted there was a profuse sprinkling in it of the word "Maitri" which means love. He seemed to have held out to the audience that love was the one great virtue which Buddha exhorted his disciples to cultivate. Buddha's words "Give love for hate" are still ringing in Ramdas' heart.

Punduloya : Sita's Asoka Vana

Our next place of halt was Punduloya. Here again we had to go motoring over winding roads gradually ascending up the mountains and reaching the height of Nuwara Eliya. Nearby is the celebrated place called Sitaliya where Sita, the consort of Sri Rama, was kept captive by the tyrant Ravana in the Asoka Vana. Here there is a temple of Sita. When we visited the temple, we were reminded of the episode in the Ramayana describing how Sita was forcibly carried off by Ravana, brought to Lanka and kept in that place. We went inside the temple to pay our homage to the Divine Mother who is represented by an image, before which we stood in a prayerful mood while pooja was performed. Although we spent only ten to fifteen minutes inside the temple, we felt blessed and delighted.

From Sitalaya we proceeded to our destination in Punduloya and were the guests of Sri K. Kumaravel, the proprietor of a Tea Estate and Factory. Here we went to the Ganesh temple and the Government school where, as usual, Bhajans were held, and Ramdas spoke a few words to the people who consisted mostly of factory workers. He spoke about the transitory nature of the world and the importance of remembering God for attaining ever-lasting peace and joy.

A Dreamland of Devotion

From the school we were taken to the Sheen Estate temple. It was raining heavily. Here we met a spectacle of devotional enthusiasm which baffles description. The devotees of the place, who were anxiously looking forward to our arrival, had made elaborate decorations. All along the two sides of the road were hung tender coconut leaf festoons, with which were woven flowers of various tints, and at a distance of less than a yard on both sides of the road. through which we passed, were placed low stools on which were seen a water-pot with a coconut on it, a burning brass lamp, flowers, rice, etc. All along the way was also spread new cloth stitched together into a continuous piece, reading up to the very door of the temple, for us to walk upon. On either side of the road, behind the decorations, stood in rows crowds of devotees expectantly awaiting our arrival. Indian music was also played. We passed through the road amidst the din of voices and fireworks. We appeared to have entered a dreamland which revealed the unusual degree to which devotional fervour of the people could reach.

Soon we found ourselves inside a small temple before the image of Ganesh. Only a few people could stand inside the temple. But there was a great rush which caused some confusion. Yet, in that confusion there was a thrill or vibration of a rare spiritual ecstasy. After the pooja was over we went to a hall where the devotees had assembled for the meeting. After the usual formalities, Ramdas was asked to speak to the audience on some religious subject. On that occasion Ramdas' heart was glowing with great emotion, as it was welling up with a rare love and joy. Ramdas is giving here an extract from the speech.

God is within you

You know that your joy and enthusiasm have come out from your own hearts. So you must understand that the God that you seek, the God of real happiness and peace, is dwelling in the hearts of all of you. We, who have come to you, are merely instrumental in invoking that divine Spirit within you and make you not only aware of it, but also enjoy blissful union with it. The inherent beauty and fragrance of the lotus flower is revealed in the presence of the sun, but the beauty and fragrance belong to the lotus itself. So it is that God who is all bliss, love, purity and peace is residing in your hearts.

Sannyas Day Message

During our stay in Punduloya, on the 27th December, the devotees observed Ramdas' Sannyas Day. In the evening there was Bhajan in the house of Kumaravel for a longer period than usual, after which Ramdas was asked to deliver a message. That day Ramdas was not in a mood to talk for a long time, but when he once started, he could stop only after about an hour. Words flowed out of his mouth in a continuous stream and he went on and on. There were only about twenty devotees sitting before him, while he was speaking, seated on a cushioned cot. The friends listened to him with rapt attention. Some extracts from this speech also are given below:

> Ramana Maharishi, it appears, said that he did no sadhana. The moment he left home and went to Arunachala, he felt that he was free. He was lost in an infinite expanse of divine existence and thereafter he lived in that state till the very last. He got this experience without any effort, because this state is not to be got by effort, but through the dawn of knowledge, in a mysterious way. We may call it divine grace, or it may be as a result of the efforts done in a previous life. Whatever that be, when knowledge comes, we are lost in the radiance of the supreme Reality, which is universal, infinite and eternal, and thereafter we live in that state perennially.

Guru is the Divine Doctor

> The more you repeat His name, the more you become conscious of Him within you. The dark forces are conquered and the mind becomes still, pure and transparent. Then the radiance, peace and joy of the Divine reveal themselves and you become like a glass case in which a brilliant light is kept. Otherwise, you are like a mud vessel inside which a lamp is burning. The mud vessel being opaque, the light does not shine out. You must make this human vehicle perfectly transparent and luminous with the light of God.
>
> Ignorance is disease. Realisation is health. We must cure ourselves of that ignorance by taking the proper remedy for it from the divine doctor. Guru is the divine doctor who makes us free by giving us the knowledge of the Self, of our real existence and being. What is the medicine? God's name! Let us always keep it on our tongue. It will purify us through and through, and dispelling ignorance from the heart, will grant us knowledge of the Divine and fill us with bliss and joy.

Next day we paid a visit to the Tea Factory of Kumaravel which was in the close vicinity of his bungalow. We were shown round all the departments in the factory where tea leaves are brought in and through various processes are turned stage by stage into the finished product which is packed into plywood boxes for transport. All the workers were highly pleased to see us. They welcomed us with great love and devotion.

Madness of Divine Love

The same evening we left Punduloya for Hatton by car. On the way we made a halt at Kotagala estate, where we expected to meet some fifty of the estate workers and spend with them about five minutes. But when we approached the place, we saw not fifty, but over a thousand people—a seething mass of human beings waiting for us! A provisional pandal had been erected for us to sit for a while, so that the workers can have Darshan. After we took our seats the workers started touching Ramdas' and Mataji's feet.

Soon there was confusion due to the great rush for touching the feet. The prospect was not very rosy. If we had continued sitting there, there would have been a tremendous melee in which hundreds would have received injuries. and the time of five minutes would have lengthened into an hour. In order to avoid all this we slipped out by the back way from the raised seat and got into the car. The devotees soon surrounded the car and held on to it so that the car, even when it was started, could not move forward. After great persuasion and appeals the estate workers allowed the car to proceed. The enthusiasm and the devotional zeal of these workers was simply marvellous.

Man's heart is a repository of divine love. Only under favourable conditions this love manifests itself, and when it once starts to flow out, we cannot gauge to what extent it will flood him and overpower him by its strong and powerful current. In fact, one is swept away and he loses himself in it, oftentimes not knowing what he is actually doing. It is this love that turns the so-called sane and discreet man into a mad devotee of God. The world, without understanding this, taunts him, persecutes him and goes to the length of even killing him!

Hatton and Nawalapitiya

We reached Hatton in the evening and straightaway went to the Sripada College hall for the meeting. Ramdas talked here on "Devotion to God." After the function we went to stay with Dr. S. Ariyaratnam. There many visitors came and put Ramdas all kinds of questions on spiritual subjects. In the afternoon next day we left Hatton and in an hour reached Rambukpitiya, where we were put up in the house of Sri C. Subramaniam. From there we visited the Kathiresan temple and went to the Kathiresan College in Nawalapitiya where the Bhajan and meeting were held. Here Ramdas spoke on "God and Man's relation to Him." He said among other things:

Separation is due to ignorance

> Verily, we and God are never separate. It is through ignorance we feel we are separate from Him. When we are free from igorance we know that we are not only one with Him, but also that we have always been one with Him. Once Sri Rama asked his great devotee Hanuman, who he was. Then Hanuman replied that as body he was Ramachandra's servant, as Jiva he was a part of Rama and as Atman he was Rama himself. So, essentially, our self is not different from God.

At all the other places Ramdas' speeches were translated into Tamil for the benefit of those in the audience who did not know English.

While we were staying here, in response to the invitation of Sri N. Muthiah, the Editor of the Tamil monthly *Atma Jyoti*, at Nawalapitiya, we climbed up the hill to reach the Atma Jyoti Nilayam. It is a small, neat and beautiful house where the editing and publishing of the monthly are carried on. The Pooja, Archan, Bhajan and other items in the programme here were performed with so much devotion that all the devotees who assembled there had no end of joy. Really, when we gather together in the name of God for singing His glories and attuning our lives with His eternal radiance, we cannot but transcend earthly planes and dwell in a consciousness in which there is nothing but rapture, ecstasy and bliss.

So, on such occasions we remain in a high state of intoxication by drinking this nectar—Love Divine.

Kandy

From Rambukpitiya we came to Kandy on our way back to Colombo. In Kandy we had an hour's programme. A meeting was held at the Pushpadana School hall under the auspices of the Saiva Mahasabha, Kandy. After Bhajan, Ramdas talked here on "The Purpose of Human Life."

Colombo Again : Parting message

At last we returned to Colombo and were again guests at the Sindhi Community Centre. The Colombo devotees were keenly awaiting our arrival after an absence of nearly sixteen days. The Sindhi Centre became once more a beehive humming with activity, devotees coming and going from early morning till late in the night. There were Bhajans, talks, Poojas, all going on in regular succession on this last day of our stay in Ceylon.

We were invited by Sir Kantiah Vaithiyanathan to his residence for Bhajan and evening meal. Although holding the high position of a Minister in the Ceylon Government, Sir Kantiah is extremely humble and pious, his wife also following him on the path. It was he who first welcomed us to Colombo when we alighted from the aeroplane. He lent his moral and spiritual support to the devotees of Colombo in regard to the innumerable programmes they carried out headed by Ramachandra during our one month's stay in Ceylon. One rarely finds men in high positions who are meek and sincere devotees of God. Among such, Kantiah Vaithiyanathan is a bright example.

The last meeting in Colombo was held in the Sindhi Community Centre. Here, after Bhajan, Ramdas gave his parting message to the devotees on the glory of the Divine name. The following are some extracts therefrom:

Name is God

Name is the precious jewel which we should not lose when we have once gained it. If we take it, we must do so with all our heart, with all love and faith in its power. Sages and saints are never tired of singing the glories of the Name. You may find this out for yourself. Sit still and sing the Name and get your mind inebriated with its sweetness. You will find your whole body is permeated with a strange ecstasy in which your ego-sense and all low desires disappear completely and you are thoroughly purified. If you continue doing this practice, you will be established in that sublime state. You will become the very image of God.

Ramdas' parting message to you is that you should take to the repetition of God's name. It is not enough to praise the Name by singing songs about it. You must act according to the teachings of the great saints. You should attempt to keep the Name constantly on your lips while walking, sitting or doing any other physical work. Gradually, you will find the Name takes possession of you. It is not that you take possession of the name but the Name takes passession of you. Then you will see how your mind refuses to wander here and there. It gets absorbed in the Name and derives immense peace and joy. Contact of the Name is contact of God, because Name and God are not different. Name is God and God is Name!

At the time of our final departure from Colombo, all the devotees gathered at the airport. It was really a very hard wrench for them to be separated from us as it was for us to part from them. At the airport Swami Prematmananda, Kantiah Viathiyanathan, Ramachandra, Jiwatram Hridaramani and a host of other devotees of both sexes were present to give us a hearty send-off. The plane started and we gradually rose up in the sky casting a long, loving and lingering look through the aeroplane window at the huge crowd of devotees gazing at us from the airport.

CHAPTER XXII

BACK IN INDIA

Tiruchirapalli

In an hour and a half we reached Tiruchi airport where we were received by Sri G. Pattabhiram. He had made arrangements for our brief stay at his hospitable home in the city. He and his wife were both vying with each other in seeing that we were comfortable in their place. We were provided with delicious lunch. It was not the lunch by itself that was tasteful, but they had mixed with it a lot of their pure love.

T. B. Sanatorium, Trichur

The same afternoon we caught the train that would take us to Kanhangad. At Coimbatore Railway platform we were greeted by a large number of devotees of the place. At Shoranur we broke our journey in order to pay a visit to the T. B. Sanatorium near Trichur. We went there to see an Ashramite, Sri Dayanand and an Ashram woman-worker Choichi, who have been staying for some months in the Sanatorium for treatment. It need hardly be said that both of them, as also Dayanand's wife and Choichi's mother, were highly delighted to see us. Ramdas was the guest here of Dr. Gopalakrishna Iyer who was all love and devotion. After remaining for about an hour with Dayanand, Ramdas went out and visited the wards of other patients. There was quite a commotion caused in the Sanatorium by our visit. We met here also many Trichur devotees who had come to see Ramdas. It was a gala day for all who were with us on this happy occasion.

Back at Anandashram

We travelled from Shoranur by another train that reached Kanhangad at 3-30 p.m. on the 2nd January 1955. As usual, at the Railway station there were many Ashram devotees present to warmly receive us. We reached the Ashram in a few minutes. We returned after an absence of five months from the Ashram. Naturally all the Ashramites were supremely delighted to have us back in perfect health and cheerfulness.

Thus ended the world tour!

Rani Lalita Devi's Motherly Love

Before concluding this narrative Ramdas wishes again to express his feelings with regard to the kindly and loving solicitude which Rani Lalita Devi evinced for Ramdas throughout the tour. Even in small details she was very particular that Ramdas should have all possible comfort during the tour. As regards the question of food on which Ramdas' health greatly depended, she saw to it that Ramdas was provided with the right kind of diet — strictly vegetarian, consisting of such articles of food as would be suitable to his health. She would herself go into the kitchen wherever we stayed and get things prepared for him by her own hands, such as rice and vegetable curries. She was, all along the tour, overwhelmingly tender and good to Ramdas in every way.

God loves His Devotees

God is indeed a lover of His devotees who rely on Him completely. It has been our experience throughout the tour that in many mysterious ways God has come to our help and relieved us of the strain which is incidental to long air-journeys and the changing circumstances of life while travelling from one country to another, covering vast spaces of land and water. Ramdas can only say here that the entire tour is a demonstration of how God looks after persons who have surrendered themselves to Him.

This aspect of the tour is perfectly patent. It has a great lesson for the non-believers to learn that there is an all-beneficent and all-powerful God controlling the destinies of human beings. It goes also to prove how, by surrendering ourselves to Him, we can draw light, inspiration, courage and protection from Him. Man is nothing by himself; but man is everything when he has attuned his life to the Divine. For to dwell in the Divine is to become the Divine. The individual then becomes the expression of the omnipresent Spirit—God. For him the entire world becomes the playground on which he plays as a child does in the front yard of its house. The key-note of such a life is perfect joy and freedom. Man's conceit, which is the outcome of his denial or forgetulness of God, is responsible for his misery and bondage.

CHAPTER XXIII

CONCLUSION

In bringing his account of the world tour to a close, Ramdas has to make a few remarks drawing together all the threads of his impressions and experiences and weaving out a succinct fabric setting out his conclusions, after a brief survey of the purpose and the consummation of the tour.

God, who truly inspired Ramdas with the idea of starting on the tour, is responsible for every act of Ramdas, small or big. From the start to the end of the travels, from Bombay to Tiruchi Ramdas was afforded a kalcidoscopic view of numerous countries and places of the world. Thorughout the entire tour, Ramdas felt at every step that his great Master, Ram, was guiding and determining all circumstances and events in his itinerary. Ram, who controls the destiny of all lives, was here mysteriously at work. In fact, He made all the plans looking to the minutest detail, and carried them out Himself with alertness, skill and care.

Ramdas played two parts in discharging the great mission with which God entrusted him; firstly as an eternal witness of the world drama, a witness who was dispassionate, unaffected, pure and blissful; secondly as an actor on the world stage, who performed his role in consonance with the divine initiative and will by spreading the unique message of universal love and service in the countries visited. In playing both these parts, as witness and as actor, Ramdas was under the dominating sway and protection of his Almighty Ram. Ramdas being one with Ram, knew he was everybody and everything, for Ram had granted him the realisation that He, Ramdas and the world are not different.

As Power, God prompts and propels all beings and creatures to action. As the static Spirit, He witnesses and sanctions all movements in nature, Himself remaining ever still, calm and radiant, the support and illuminator of the visible and manifest life.

The wheel of evolution is moving, producing cataclysmic changes, particularly in the affairs of men all over the world. Without such far reachings changes, mankind cannot progress towards its destiny. Humanity has been groping in the dark to find the way out into the open light of freedom and peace from the congested, narrow and darkened prison-house of its own making.

The Cosmos is like a sea agitated by storms and cyclones, causing huge waves to rise and fall, bringing about tremendous movements in the ascending and descending scale—one creative and another destructive. A short period of harmony, peace, balance and equipoise is succeeded by an equally short period of conflict and chaos. It is perfectly clear to a purified vision that all these gigantic changes in the course of evolution are going on so that mankind may, through these contrary processes, ultimately fulfil its highest spiritual destiny. For as in the case of individuals, the human race as a whole also must march to its goal only through the play of opposite forces and attain inner peace and equilibrium.

Here and there, men illumined with universal vision, who have realised for themselves the beauty and glory of such a state of harmony, are appearing occasionally as brilliant meteors in the dark and clouded world-firmament. For a moment the gaze of humanity is turned towards these spiritual luminaries, who exercise an upward pull and leave an indelible impress on human hearts. Such were the Vedic Rishis who laid the foundations of religion at the dawn of an enlightened age, the Avatars like Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Mohammed and the unbroken line of Sages and Saints who held aloft the torch of spirituality in all climes and ages.

More than all the world's military conquerors, monarchs, ministers of State, politicians and international statesmen, these spiritual teachers and prophets of mankind have been the real makers of history. They have often provided inspiration and energy from behind the scenes to the major actors on the world-stage who catch the lime-light. Their influence no doubt wanes from time to time, owing to the downward pull of forces in the changing play of cosmic movements, and what is gained for a time seems to be lost in the next cycle. But the loss is only apparent. The rise and fall, the backward and forward movements, are all part of the spiral of progress which humanity makes in its onward march of self-fulfilment. The ultimate recovery and reassertion of the Spirit is certain. *'Satyameva Jayate'*, sings the Veda. Truth or God alone triumphs. In the Bhagawad Gita the Lord has also given His promise, "Whenever unrighteousness or disharmony prevails, I come from age to age to replace them by righteousness and harmony." Hence the suzerainty of the Spirit over matter, and the adjustment of all relationships into a state of harmony is inevitable. The establishment of universal peace and goodwill is bound to take place.

In the pages of this book, here and there, Ramdas has made some observations which may be construed as critical, if not condemnatory. Ramdas' aim is to point out the many weaknesses and frailties to which human beings are subject to under the influence of ignorance, and which are at bottom responsible for the present disturbed and agitated state of the world. At the same time, he has prescribed certain remedies by the adoption of which we can do away with these evils and thereby produce an atmosphere of goodwill and peace in the world. We are the makers of our own destiny. We can create a harmonious world out of the present chaotic conditions.

Ramdas can also say that his observations are the outcome of the reactions produced on him by the people with whom he contacted and by the environments in which he moved, for ever so short a time, in the course of his tour. Strangely enough, his mind is like a clear mirror in which is reflected the greatness or weakness, as the case may be, of the people who associate with him. So the reader should bear with him in all that he has said with utter sincerity—free from any kind of bias or ill-will towards anybody or set of people, nation or country.

Ramdas may also assure the reader that he cannot, true to the highest spiritual experience that God has granted him, be anything but impartial in his assessment of the greatness or otherwise of the different nations of the world. The problem we are faced with is not merely an individual or national one. It is universal in character, as it affects the entire humanity.

It is at once painful and surprising that in many lands, religion which should unite man with man has created acute differences between them, often leading to acts of mutual hate, violent conflicts and destruction. The messages which the spiritual masters delivered to the world have been either misunderstood or misapplied with the result the very purpose for which these Great Ones came is denied or frustrated.

Unity or harmony is the secret underlying the teachings of these great souls. They, with one voice, declare that the Universal Spirit dwells in the hearts of us all, that we are the very expression of that Spirit. Verily, the individual is the embodiment of the universal.

Religion is the way of approach to God. So all religions have the same common aim. To decry one religion in order to glorify another, or to hold up one religion as the only true one and denounce the others as false, to assert that one Teacher or Prophet alone has shown the way to salvation, while all others are either imposters or imperfect in their spiritual realisation, betray gross ignorance. Religious feuds and acts of hate causing bloodshed are the outcome of such ignorance and fanaticism.

During the world tour Ramdas met the protagonists of various faiths, talked and moved with them in a friendly spirit. They represented either the religion in which they were born, or the religion which they espoused. At heart they sought the same Truth or God. They honestly believed that, by realising God, all humanity would be free from the evils that are responsible for strife and discord. Under these circumstances, It is a matter for wonder why they should entrench themselves within the walls of dogmas and doctrines and cast a doubtful glance at the followers of other religions. The development of a catholic spirit, a wide and comprehensive scale of spiritual values, aims and attainments, is an urgent and essential need for the adherents of all religions.

A true Christian is he who has learnt to love all mankind as his brethren; a true Hindu is he who looks upon all beings as the manifestation of his own immortal Self; a true Buddhist is he who extends his love towards the entire humanity; a true Mussalman is he who treats all the members of the human race in a spirit of kinship and brotherhood. Hence it follows that the votaries of various religions if they are true to their faith, should sink all differences and live in harmony and peace with all people in the world.

Thanks to the progress made by modern man along the path of rationalism, the wall that divides one religion from another today is a thin one. So, to break it down is easy, if only the will is found. The moment the soul of man is freed from the cramping and suffocating barriers which divide him from his brother on the score of religion, or any other consideration, he is sure to swim in the infinite ocean of love, a perfectly free, blissful and radiant being.

God in His infinite mercy has shown Ramdas that nothing short of a universal vision which enables one to hold out his hands to the entire humanity in an offer of pure love and service, feeling at heart his spiritual unity with all, is the one supreme glory, achivement and consummation of human life. On the basis of this exalted vision alone, a man can cultivate universal love and service and lead a life of perfect peace and harmony with all people on this earth. On this high plane, considerations relating to country, creed, caste and colour can have no significance for him. All differences are resolved, all boundaries transcended, all barriers broken which are the outcome of physical, mental and intellectual limitations. Even on the lesser planes, there is ample scope for adjustments in a spirit of harmony, unity and co-ordination.

Now, a word about the future of India and the world. India is a land of sages and saints. India is the home of all religions. India is the mother of all philosophies. In the realm of thought and spirit India stands at the apex of the highest knowledge and realisation. This is admitted by all who have really tried to understand her inherent greatness. But India today is a backward country in so far as her material and economic conditions are concerned.

A day will surely come when India will be blessed also with material prosperity. Then a prosperous India, founded upon a sublime spiritual realisation among its people, will serve as a beacon to the entire humanity. India shall be a great beneficent force in the world—a free giver, out of love, of her material and spiritual wealth to all parts of the world. India will teach mankind how and what it is to live in unity, peace and harmony, how and what it is to be free from the selfish aims of self-aggrandizement; how God is one, and all beings and creatures are His children and embodiments.

Lastly, Ramdas says on the authority of his spiritual experience that God is one, and God's representatives everywhere on this earth are one. All forces working in nature are one, as they spring from the play of Prakriti. All creatures and objects upon the face of this fair earth have their source in the one. They are born from and live, move and act in the consciousness of the one Spirit that permeates all lives and all things. One is the eternal cosmic refrain, one is the never-ending song, the divine music of the spheres. One is the World, one is Truth and one is God!

GLOSSARY

ACHINTYA. Inconceivable.
ADHARMA. Unrighteousness.
AHIMSA. Harmlessness.
ARCHAN. Worship.
ASANA. Seat; yogic posture.
ASHRAM. Hermitage or abode of a saint.
ASHRAMITE. Inmate of an Ashram.
ATMAN. Universal Self.
AVATAR. Incarnation of God.

BHAGAWAD GITA. Teachings of Sri Krishna to Arjuna; The Celestial Song.
BHAGAWAN. God
BHAJAN. Worship; remembrance of God; singing of hymns of God.
BHUMI. Earth.
BRAHMACHARYA. A spiritual discipline involving strict continence.
BRAHMAN. The Absolute Reality.
BRAHMANANDA. Bliss of Brahman.
BUDDHA. The ninth Incarnation of God; the founder of Buddhism.

CHELA. Disciple.

DAGOBA. Buddhist temple.
DARSHAN. Visit or vision.
DHARMA. Righteousness.
DHOTI. Cloth worn round and below the waist of a male.

GANESHA. An elephant headed God propitiated for overcoming obstacles; brother of Muruga.
GOPIS. Milkmaid-devotees of Sri Krishna in Brindavan.
GUNAS. Sattwa (light), Rajas (activity) and Tamas (darkness).

GURU.	Spiritual awakener; destroyer of ignorance.
GURU BHAKTI.	Devotion to Guru.
GURUDWARA.	Temple of Sikhs.
GURU GRANTH SAHEB.	Holy scripture of Sikhs.

HANUMAN.	The great monkey-devotee of Sri Ramachandra.
HIMALAYAS.	The abode of snow; the highest mountain-range in India and the world.

JAI.	Victory.
JAPA.	Vocal repetition or silent remembrance of Divine Name or Mantra.
JAPA YOGA.	Union with God by means of Japa.
JAYANTI.	Birthday.
JIVA or JIVATMA.	Individual soul or self.
JNANA.	Divine knowledge; self-realisation.
JNANI.	A person who has attained Jnana.

KARMA.	Action or work.
KARMA YOGA.	The Path of Action.
KRISHNA.	The eighth of the ten incarnations of God.
KSHETRA.	Holy place or field.

LILA.	Divine Play.

MAHAVAKYAS.	Great utterances contained in the Upanishads.
MAHAVIRA.	The founder of Jainism.
MANTRA.	The sacred Name or formula used in Japa.
MATAJI.	Holy Mother.
MATH.	Monastery.
MAYA.	Illusion; the delusive power of God.
MOKSHA.	Liberation.
MURUGA.	God Subrahmanya, brother of Ganesha.

NIRGUNA.	Impersonal; beyond Gunas.
NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI.	The final state in which the aspirant experiences his oneness with Brahman.
NISHKAMA KARMA.	Desireless action.

OM. Symbol of God or Brahman.

PADA POOJA. Washing and worshipping the feet of a saint.

PALI. The language in which Buddhist scriptures are written.

PARAMAHAMSA. One belonging to the highest order of Sannyasa.

PARAMATMA. The Supreme Soul or Self.

POOJA. Worship; Archan.

POOJARI. A worshipper in temples; Archak.

PRAKRITI. Primordial Nature or the energy-aspect of God.

PRANAMS. Obeisance.

PRASAD. Food that has been offered to God or a saint.

PURANAS. Books recording the lives and teachings of the saints and incarnations of God.

RAMAYANA. The great poetic Hindu epic which relates the life and deeds of Sri Ramachandra.

RAM-MANTRA. The formula or Name of Ram for Japa.

RISHIS. Spiritually perfect sages.

SADHANA. Spiritual discipline.

SAMAJAM. Society or group.

SAGUNA. Personal God; God with attributes.

SAGUNA SWARUPA. Embodiment of God.

SAGUNA UPASANA. Devotion to a Personal God.

SAMADHI. A state of absorption in the contemplation of God.

SANGHAM. Association or group; samajam.

SANMARGA. Righteous way.

SANNYASI. A Hindu monk.

SAREE. The cloth worn by an Indian woman.

SATCHIDANAND. Existence-Knowledge-Bliss.

SATSANG. Company of saints; devotional group meeting.

SLOKA. A verse.

SRI. Wealth, wisdom and power; Goddess of ——.

SUFI. A religious sect among Muslims.

SWAMI. A prefix to the name of a Sannyasi.

TABLA. A pair of drums used as musical accompaniment.

TAMASHA. Great fun.

VAIKUNTA. Abode of Lord Vishnu.

VANA. Forest; garden.

VEDANTA. Philosophy of the Upanishads; the end of the Vedas.

VEDANTIN. A Hindu philosopher.

VIRAHA. The pangs of separation.

VIRAT. The cosmic form of God.

YOGA. Union of the individual soul with God.

YOGAS. The Paths of Bhakti, Karma and Jnana.

YOGA MUDRA. A symbol in yogic practice.

YOGIS. Those who have practised Yoga.

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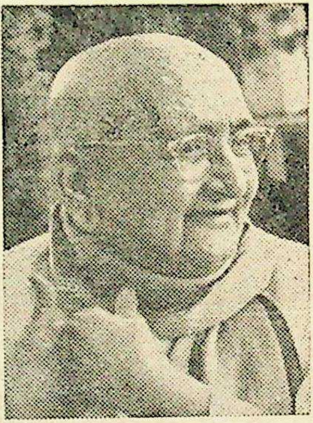

THE AUTHOR

After receiving initiation of the *Ram Mantra* from his father, Swami Ramdas, who was then known as Vittal Rao, renounced the worldly life in 1922 and wandered as a mendicant Sadhu all over India and in the Himalayas, in a frenzy of God-intoxication, with the holy and all-powerful Ram Mantra ever on his tongue, and with God as his only refuge and guide. His was the completest surrender to the Will of God.

Many years of wandering life brought him finally back to South Kanara. Having attained spiritual liberation and God-vision, he started his mission to guide and serve mankind in order to awaken it to the awareness of God. He founded an Ashram—named Anandashram—near Kanhangad, N. Kerala, which is fostered by love and care by Mother Krishnabai, his foremost disciple and a Self-realized soul. Swami Ramdas' writings come from the deeps of Reality and therefore go straight to the heart. In 1954, he and Mother Krishnabai went on a world tour and hundreds of their devotees, friends, and admirers who had loved and venerated them from a distance, had a chance to come into close contact with them. Since the last three decades Anandashram has been a powerful spiritual beacon, and thousands have been constantly visiting it, carrying home with them the torch of Light, Love and Service lit at the feet of the great Master.

Swami Ramdas attained *mahanirvana* in July, 1963.